This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

UC-NRLF
$B 317 671

YB 54294

Digitized by Google

SIGILLVM · VNIVERSITATIS · CALIFORNIENSIS
FIAT LVX
MDCCCLXVIII
EX LIBRIS

816
B573
cEr
PQ2435
C4
1895
v.3
v.3

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

LA CHARTREUSE DE PARME

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

LA CHARTREUSE DE PARME

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

BY

MARIE-HENRI BEYLE
("DE STENDHAL")

WITH THIRTY ILLUSTRATIONS BY V. FOULQUIER
ETCHED BY G. MERCIER

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
E. P. ROBINS

IN THREE VOLUMES
VOL. III

NEW-YORK
GEORGE H. RICHMOND & CO.
1895

Digitized by Google

To replace
514068.

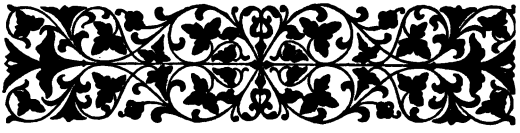
UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Copyright, 1895, by
GEORGE H. RICHMOND & CO.

THE DE VINNE PRESS.

Digitized by Google

816
B573
cEr
v.3



LA CHARTREUSE DE PARME

XIX

IT was all owing to General Fabio Conti's ambition, aroused to an insane pitch by the troubles that had risen in the Prime Minister Mosca's path and seemed to announce his speedy overthrow, that he badgered and worried his daughter as he did. He assured her many times a day, and in no gentle terms, that she was ruining his prospects by her delay in choosing a husband; at twenty years and over it was time a young woman knew her own mind; he was at a disadvantage owing to her unreasonable obstinacy, and was going to put up with it no longer, etc.

It was to avoid these constantly recurring fits of ill humor that Clelia had made a refuge

569041

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

of her aviary; the only means of access to it was by a narrow and steep staircase that the Governor's gouty legs found it a painful task to climb.

For the last few weeks Clelia's feelings had been so wrought up and agitated, she had so little idea herself of what was best for her, that, while she had not positively pledged her word to her father, she was almost in the position of one committed. In one of his outbursts of fury the General had sworn a great oath that he would pack her off to the strictest convent in Parma, and leave her there to cool her heels until she came to her senses and was prepared to meet his wishes.

"You are aware that our family, though of respectable antiquity, has to exist as best it may on six thousand livres a year, while the annual income of the Marquis Crescenzi is not less than a hundred thousand crowns. Every one at court admits he has a most amiable disposition; no one has ever had reason to find fault with him; he is handsome, young, stands high in the Prince's favor, and I say that any woman who declines his attentions must be crazy. If this were the first time of your offending I might pass it over

Digitized by Google

and say nothing; but this makes the fifth or sixth offer you have refused, and from the most eligible parties about the court, like the little simpleton you are. And if I should be retired on half-pay where would you be, I should like to know? And how my enemies would crow to see me obliged to put up with a second-floor lodging—I whose name has been so often mentioned for the ministry! No, by thunder! I have been playing the rôle of Cassandra in my kindness long enough. If you have any reasonable objection to make to this poor Marquis Crescenzi, who honors you by loving you, is willing to take you without a dowry, and stands ready to settle thirty thousand francs a year on you—which will at least enable me to keep a roof over my head—if, I say, you have any just cause of complaint against him, produce it, or else, by thunder! you shall marry him before you are two months older, whether you will or no."

All this bluster produced but a slight impression on Clelia, with the exception of the threat of putting her in a convent, which, of course, implied her removal from the citadel, and that at the very moment when Fabrice's life seemed hanging by a thread; for there

Digitized by Google

was not a week that rumors of his approaching end were not rife throughout the court and city. Argue with herself as she might, she could not bring herself to run that risk. What, suffer herself to be parted from Fabrice, and at the very moment when his life was trembling in the balance! To her eyes that was the greatest of the evils that threatened her; at least it was the most urgent.

Not that her prospects of happiness were bright even should she not be parted from Fabrice; she believed him to be the Duchess's lover, and her heart was gnawed by jealous pangs. The advantages of this beautiful and universally admired woman were ever in her thoughts. The reserve that she had taught herself to observe toward Fabrice, the language of signs to which she had restricted him, the fear lest she might be betrayed into an indiscretion, all seemed to combine to bar the way against her taking any steps to learn the truth as to his relations with the Duchess. Thus each day she suffered acuter torment at the cruel thought of having a rival in Fabrice's heart, and each day she dreaded more giving him an opportunity to tell the whole truth as to what was passing in that heart. But the charm there would be in

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

listening to the confession of his real sentiments! What happiness in the ability to dispel the suspicions that were envenoming her life!

Fabrice was fickle; he had made himself notorious at Naples for the frequency with which he changed his mistresses. Clelia, of course, being a young unmarried woman, was supposed to know nothing of such matters; but now she was a canoness and an attendant on the court she contrived in a quiet way to pick up a good deal of useful information about the young men who were suitors for her hand; and among all those gilded youths Fabrice, we are grieved to say, had the reputation of being the most inconstant and unreliable in his relations with women. He was a prisoner, time hung heavy on his hands, he made love to the only woman he could find to speak to; that was perfectly natural, was it not? and no more than was to be expected, poor Clelia was obliged sorrowfully to admit. Even though he should assure her in so many words that he no longer loved the Duchess, how could she trust him? And even though she trusted him, what confidence could she place in the durability of his sentiments? And finally, to cap the climax of her despair,

Digitized by Google

was not Fabrice already far advanced in the ecclesiastical career? Was he not almost ready to take the oaths that would bind him for all his lifetime? Were not the highest dignities of the Church awaiting him? "If I had one scintilla of sense left," said the unhappy girl, "should I not fly at once? Should I not ask my father to send me away to some distant convent? And, to make my misery complete, it is precisely that fear of being taken from the citadel and shut up in a convent that makes me behave as I am doing. It is that fear which makes me a dissembler, which drives me to the odious and degrading falsehood of pretending to accept the attentions of the Marquis Crescenzi."

Clelia's conduct had always been guided by her reason—she could look back and not remember a single inconsiderate action—and now her behavior was the height of unreason. Consider what her suffering must have been! It was the more cruel that she permitted herself no illusions. She had placed her affections on a man who was blindly loved by the most beautiful woman of the court, by a woman who was in so many respects her, Clelia's, superior! And that man, had he been free, was incapable of a serious attach-

Digitized by Google

ment, while she, as she knew too well, could have but one attachment this side the grave.

It was therefore with a heart agitated by feelings of bitter self-reproach that Clelia came daily to the aviary. On reaching the spot, as if in obedience to a will more powerful than her own, her anxiety was transferred to another object and became less torturing, her remorse was silent for a time; she watched with a wildly beating heart for the moment when Fabrice should open the sort of peep-hole contrived by him in the shutter that hid the window. It often happened that the presence of the turnkey Grillo interfered to prevent their signaled correspondence.

One evening, about eleven o'clock, Fabrice heard unaccustomed noises in the citadel. At night, by going to the window and applying his ear to his peep-hole, he could sometimes distinguish the louder sounds proceeding from the main staircase—known as the Staircase of the Three Hundred Steps—which, commencing at the outer court, ascended through the great tower to the stone-paved esplanade on which stood the Governor's palace and the Farnèse Tower of which he was an inmate.

Digitized by Google

About half-way up—at a height of one hundred and eighty steps, to be exact—this staircase skirted the southern side of a spacious court, across which was thrown a light and narrow iron bridge, in the middle of which a porter was always stationed. The foot-path was so narrow that this porter, who was relieved every six hours, was obliged to stand and flatten himself against the rail when any one wished to pass him on the bridge he guarded, and which was the only means of access to the Governor's palace and the Farnèse Tower. By releasing a spring, the key of which the Governor always carried on his person, this bridge could be precipitated to the bottom of the court, more than a hundred feet below. That simple precaution taken, and as there was no other staircase in the entire citadel, and it was an adjutant's duty to bring to the Governor's office within his bedchamber every night at twelve o'clock the ropes of all the wells, the great man would be completely inaccessible within the precincts of his palace, and it would be equally impossible for any one to approach the Farnèse Tower. These things Fabrice had noticed on the day of his introduction to the citadel, and they had also been explained to

Digitized by Google

him in detail by Grillo, who, like all jailers, was addicted to expatiating on the merits and excellences of his prison; hence he did not much flatter himself with the hope of an escape. Still, he remembered a saying of Abbé Blanès: "The lover thinks more of getting at his mistress than the husband of guarding his wife; the prisoner gives more thought to escaping than the jailer to keeping the door locked; whence it will be seen that lover and prisoner are bound to be successful in the end in spite of obstacles."

That evening Fabrice distinctly heard the footsteps of a crowd of men crossing the iron bridge, which was called the Bridge of the Slave, because at some remote day a huge Dalmatian slave had effected his escape by hurling the porter down into the courtyard.

"They are coming to take some one away, or perhaps it 's I they 're after to carry off and hang; but if there 's going to be a row of any kind I may as well be ready to take advantage of it." He had seized his weapons and was groping in the rat-holes for his money, when he suddenly desisted.

"Man is a strange animal," he said, "there 's no denying it! If there were an invisible spectator here watching my proceed-

Digitized by Google

ing I wonder what he would say! You are going to attempt an escape, eh, Monsignor? What would you do when you found yourself back in Parma, you idiot? Would n't your very first thought be how you could most quickly get back to Clelia? If there is to be a row let 's take advantage of the confusion to slip into the Governor's palace; perhaps I may find an opportunity to speak to her; I may even muster up courage to kiss her hand. General Conti, as vain as he is timid, has his palace guarded by five sentries, one at each angle of the building and a fifth at the main entrance; but luckily the night is overcast." He went to see what Grillo and his dog were doing: the turnkey was sound asleep in a primitive hammock made of an ox-hide and a network of stout cord; Towzer opened his eyes, rose, and crept softly up to lick the young man's hand.

Our prisoner sprang lightly up the six steps that led to his wooden cabin. The noise at the base of the Farnèse Tower and around the door became so loud that he thought Grillo must surely wake. Fabrice, with all his weapons about his person and ready for action, was thinking of the thrilling adventures he was to participate in that night,

Digitized by Google

when suddenly his ears were greeted by the opening bars of a charming symphony: it was a serenade tendered to the General or his daughter. He broke out in a fit of boisterous laughter: "And I was thinking of cutting and slashing with my dagger! True, serenades are not usual things in a prison, but they are at least as frequent as revolts or attempts to rescue prisoners." The music was good, and appeared to Fabrice delicious, who had had no distraction of any kind in so many long weeks. It brought tears of tenderness to his eyes; in his ravishment he addressed his Clelia in speeches of irresistible eloquence. But when he saw her at noon next day her face was clouded with such a somber melancholy, she was so pale, there was such indignation in the looks she cast on him from time to time, that he did not venture to question her about the serenade; he feared his curiosity would appear impolite.

Clelia had good reason to be indignant and sad: the serenade had been given in her honor by the Marquis Crescenzi, and the publicity of the affair had in some sort made it an official announcement of her engagement. Up to the day of the serenade—until nine o'clock that evening, in fact—Clelia

Digitized by Google

had resisted tooth and nail, but had finally given way before her father's renewed threat of sending her to a convent.

"And in that case I should see him no more!" she had told herself with tears. It was in vain her reason added, "I should see no more of that person who is bound in any case to bring me suffering; I should see no more of that lover of the Duchess, of that trifler who at Naples had ten mistresses and betrayed them all; I should see no more of that young adventurer who, if he escapes the hangman, will presently take holy orders! It would be a crime for me to look at him once he is free and outside this citadel, and his inborn fickleness will spare me the temptation; for what am I to him?—merely a plaything that serves now and then to divert the tedium of his captivity." Amid these bitter thoughts rose the remembrance of Fabrice's smile as the gendarmes were conducting him from the office of the jail to his cell in the Farnèse Tower. Her eyes overflowed with tears: "Dear friend, what would I not suffer for your sake! You will be my ruin; I know it—it is my fate—and I feel I am making myself your accomplice this evening by listening to that odious serenade—but never

Digitized by Google

mind; at noon to-morrow I shall behold your dear face once more!"

It was on the very day succeeding that day when Clelia had shown herself ready to make such sacrifices for the young prisoner whom she loved so fondly; it was on the morrow of that day when, with a full knowledge of all his faults, she felt she could bestow on him all she held most precious, that Fabrice was chilled and discouraged by her coldness. If, using only the imperfect signal-code that served as their means of communication, he had put the slightest pressure on Clelia's feelings, in all probability she could not have restrained her tears, and he might have obtained a full confession of all she felt for him. But he lacked boldness; he stood in mortal terror of the girl's displeasure; he dreaded the punishment she might visit on him. It took him eight days, after the night of the serenade, to restore matters to their former footing of ease and friendliness. The poor girl, fearing to betray her secret, assumed a severity she was far from feeling, and it seemed to Fabrice each day that he was losing ground with her.

One day—Fabrice had been a captive nearly three months, had had absolutely no

Digitized by Google

communication with the outer world, and yet was not unhappy—Grillo had remained hanging about the cell until a late hour of the morning. Fabrice could think of no way of getting rid of him, and was on pins and needles; half-past twelve had struck when at last he was enabled to open the little trap in the hateful shutter.

Clelia was standing at the window of the aviary in an expectant attitude, an expression of profound despair on her contracted features. As soon as she saw Fabrice she signaled to him that all was lost; then, hurrying to her piano, and adapting her words to the accompaniment of a recitative from a favorite opera, in accents tremulous with her emotion and the fear of being overheard by the sentry beneath, she sang:

"Ah, do I see you still alive? Praise God for His infinite mercy! Barbone, the wretch whose insolence you chastised the day of your arrival here, disappeared some time ago and for a few days was not seen about the citadel. He returned day before yesterday, and since then I have reason to fear he has a design of poisoning you. He has been seen prowling about the kitchen of the palace where your meals are prepared. I

Digitized by Google

can assert nothing positively, but it is my maid's belief that his skulking there bodes you no good. I was frightened this morning, not seeing you at the usual time; I thought you must be dead. Until you hear more from me do not touch the food they give you; I will try to manage to convey a little chocolate to you. In any case, if you have a cord, or can make one from your linen, let it down from your window among the orange-trees this evening at nine o'clock. I will attach a stronger cord to it, and with its aid you can draw up the bread and chocolate I will have in readiness."

Fabrice had carefully preserved the bit of charcoal he had found in the stove; taking advantage of Clelia's more softened mood, he formed on the palm of his hand a number of letters in succession which, taken together, made up these words:

"I love you, and life is dear to me only when I can see you. Above all else, send me paper and a pencil."

As Fabrice had hoped and expected, the extreme terror visible in the young girl's face operated to prevent her from terminating the interview on receipt of this audacious message; she only testified her displeasure

Digitized by Google

by her looks. Fabrice had the prudence to add: "The wind blows so hard to-day that I couldn't catch quite all you said; and then, too, the sound of the piano drowns your voice. You were saying something about poison, weren't you—what was it?"

At these words the young girl's terror returned in all its violence; she hurriedly set to work to describe with ink a number of large capital letters on the leaves she tore from one of her books, and Fabrice was delighted to see her at last adopt the method of correspondence that he had been vainly advocating for the last three months. But this system, although an improvement on the signals, was less desirable than a regular exchange of letters, so Fabrice constantly feigned to be unable to decipher the words of which she exhibited the component letters.

A summons from her father obliged her to leave the aviary. She was in great alarm lest he might come to look for her there; his suspicious nature would have been likely to scent danger in the proximity of his daughter's window to the prisoner's. It had occurred to Clelia a short time before, while so anxiously awaiting Fabrice's appearance, that pebbles might be made factors in their

Digitized by Google

correspondence, by wrapping the paper on which the message was written round them and throwing them up so they should fall within the open upper portion of the screen. The device would have worked well unless Fabrice's keeper chanced to be in the room at the time.

Our prisoner proceeded to tear one of his shirts into narrow strips, forming a sort of ribbon. Shortly after nine o'clock that evening he heard a tapping on the boxes of the orange-trees under his window; he cautiously lowered his ribbon, and on drawing it up again found attached to its free end a long cord by means of which he hauled up a supply of chocolate and, to his inexpressible satisfaction, a package of note-paper and a pencil. He dropped the cord again, but to no purpose; perhaps the sentries on their rounds had approached the orange-trees. But his delight was sufficient for one evening. He sat down and wrote a long letter to Clelia; scarcely was it ended when he fastened it to the cord and let it down. For more than three hours he waited in vain for some one to come and take it; two or three times he drew it up and made alterations in it. "If Clélia does not get my letter to-

Digitized by Google

night," he said to himself, "while those ideas of poison are troubling her brain, it is more than likely that to-morrow morning she will refuse to receive it."

The fact was that Clelia had been obliged to drive to the city with her father. Fabrice knew how matters stood when he heard the General's carriage enter the court about half-past twelve; he knew it was the General's carriage by the horses' step. What was his delight when, shortly after hearing the jingle of the General's spurs as he crossed the esplanade and the rattle of muskets as the sentries presented arms, he felt a gentle tug at the cord, the end of which he had kept wrapped around his wrist! Something heavy was made fast to the cord; two little jerks notified him to haul up. He had some difficulty in landing the object over a cornice that projected under his window.

The article that he had secured at expense of so much trouble proved to be a carafe of water wrapped in a shawl. The poor young man, who had been living for so long a time in such complete solitude, covered the shawl with rapturous kisses. But words are inadequate to express his emotion when, after

Digitized by Google

so many days of vain waiting, he discovered a scrap of paper pinned to the shawl.

"Drink no water but this; satisfy your hunger with chocolate," said this precious missive. "To-morrow I will try to get some bread to you; I will mark the crust at top and bottom with little crosses made with ink. It is a frightful thing to say, but you must know it: I believe others are implicated in Barbone's design to poison you. Could you not have understood that the subject you spoke of in your letter in pencil is displeasing to me? I should not think of writing to you were it not for the great peril that is hanging over us. I have seen the Duchess; she is well, as is the Count, but she is very thin. Write no more on that subject which you know of; would you wish to make me angry?"

It cost Clelia an effort to write the last sentence but one of the above note. It was in everybody's mouth in court circles that Mme. Sanseverina was manifesting a great deal of friendly interest in Count Baldi, that extremely handsome man and quondam friend of the Marquise Raversi. The one thing certain was that he and the Marquise had separated, and he was alleged to have

Digitized by Google

behaved most shamefully toward the lady who for six years had been to him a mother and given him his standing in society.

Clelia had found it necessary to rewrite the brief note, penned in haste, because in the first copy there was some mention of the new liaison that popular malignity ascribed to the Duchess.

"It is a meanness I am not capable of!" she exclaimed. "What, tell Fabrice those nasty things about the woman whom he loves!"

The next morning, long before the sun was up, Grillo entered Fabrice's cell, laid down what seemed to be a pretty heavy package, and vanished without saying a word. The package contained a good-sized loaf of bread, plentifully ornamented with little crosses made with a pen. Fabrice covered them with kisses. Why? Because he was in love. Beside the loaf lay a rouleau incased in many thicknesses of paper; it contained six thousand francs in sequins. Finally, Fabrice discovered a handsome brand-new prayer-book; these words, in a writing he was beginning to be acquainted with, were written on the fly-leaf:

"*Poison!* Beware the water, the wine, everything; confine yourself to chocolate.

Digitized by Google

Give the untasted dinner to the dog; it will not do to show distrust; the enemy would have recourse to other methods. For God's sake, be cautious! no rashness!"

Fabrice made haste to remove the telltale writing which might have compromised Clelia, and to tear out a number of leaves from the prayer-book, with which he made several alphabets; each letter was neatly formed with powdered charcoal moistened with wine. The alphabets were quite dry when at a quarter to twelve Clelia appeared at the window of the aviary. "The main thing now is to persuade her to use them," said Fabrice to himself. But as it happened, fortunately, she had much to say to the young prisoner in regard to the plan to poison him (a dog belonging to one of the kitchen-maids had died after eating a dish cooked for Fabrice), so that Clelia not only made no objections to the use of the alphabets, but had herself prepared one in the highest style of art with ink. Under this method, which did not work altogether smoothly at the beginning, the conversation lasted an hour and a half, which was as long as Clelia dared remain in the aviary. Two or three times, when Fabrice trespassed on forbidden ground and

Digitized by Google

alluded to matters that were taboo, she made no answer and walked away to feed her birds.

Fabrice requested that when she sent him his supply of water at evening she would accompany it with one of her alphabets, which, being traced in ink, were legible at a greater distance. He did not fail to write her a good long letter, and was careful to put in it no soft nonsense—at least, of a nature to offend.

The next day, in their alphabetical conversation, Clelia had no reproach to make him. She informed him that there was less to be apprehended from the poisoners. Barbone had been waylaid and nearly murdered by the lovers of the Governor's scullery-maids; he would scarcely venture to show his face in the kitchens again. She owned up to stealing a counter-poison from her father; she sent it to him with directions how to use it, but the main thing was to reject at once all food that seemed to have an unnatural taste.

Clelia had subjected Don Cesare to a rigorous examination, without succeeding in discovering whence came the six thousand francs received by Fabrice. In any case, it was a good sign: it showed that the severity of his confinement was relaxing.

Digitized by Google

The poison episode had a very favorable effect on our hero's amatory enterprise; still, he could never extort anything at all resembling a confession of love; but he had the felicity of living on terms of intimacy with Clelia. Every morning, and often at evening also, there was a long conversation with the alphabets; every evening at nine o'clock Clelia received a lengthy letter, and sometimes accorded it a few brief words of answer; she sent him the daily paper and an occasional new book; finally, the rugged Grillo had been so far tamed as to keep Fabrice supplied with bread and wine, which were handed him daily by Clelia's maid. This led honest Grillo to conclude that the Governor was not of the same mind as those who had engaged Barbone to poison the young Monsignor; at which he rejoiced exceedingly, as did his comrades, for there was a saying current in the prison: "You have only to look Monsignor del Dongo in the face; he is certain to give you money."

Fabrice was very pale; lack of exercise was injuring his health; but for that he had never been so happy. The tone of the conversation between Clelia and him was familiar and often gay. The only moments

Digitized by Google

of the girl's life not beset with dark forebodings and remorse were those spent in conversing with him. She was so thoughtless as to remark one day:

"I admire your delicacy: because I am the Governor's daughter you have nothing to say to me of the pleasures of freedom!"

"That 's because I am not so absurd as to have aspirations in that direction," replied Fabrice. "How often could I hope to see you if I were living in Parma, a free man again? And life would not be worth living if I could not tell you all my thoughts—no, not that exactly: you take precious good care I don't tell you *all* my thoughts! But in spite of your cruel tyranny, to live without seeing you daily would be a far worse punishment than captivity; in all my life I never was so happy! Is n't it strange to think happiness was awaiting me in a prison?"

"There is a good deal to be said on that point," rejoined Clelia, with an air that all at once became very serious, almost threatening.

"What!" exclaimed Fabrice, in alarm, "am I in danger of losing the small place I have won in your heart, my sole joy in this world?"

"Yes," she replied. "Although your repu-

Digitized by Google

tation in society is that of a gentleman and gallant man, I have reason to believe you are not acting ingenuously toward me. But I don't wish to discuss this matter to-day."

This strange exordium cast an element of embarrassment into the conversation, and tears were often in the eyes of both.

The Fiscal Rassi still harbored his ambition for a change of name; the one he had made for himself sounded unpleasantly in his ears, and he was desirous of becoming Baron Riva. Count Mosca, on the other hand, was working with all the energy and ability he was master of to inflame the venal judge's aspirations, while at the same time he was luring on the Prince with idle dreams of becoming constitutional king of Lombardy. He could think of no other means of retarding Fabrice's death.

The Prince said to Rassi: "Two weeks of despair, followed by two weeks of hope—that is the course of treatment, patiently followed, by which alone we can hope to bend the will of that proud woman. The most vicious horses can be tamed by alternating gentle treatment with severity. Press home the caustic to the sore."

Digitized by Google

Hence pretty regularly, at biweekly intervals, the Parmesans were treated to a fresh crop of rumors pointing to Fabrice's approaching execution. These proceedings caused the unhappy Duchess unutterable distress. Faithful to her resolve not to allow the Count to share her ruin, she saw him but twice a month; but she atoned for her cruelty toward the poor man by the constantly recurring fits of despair and gloom in which her days were passed. In vain Count Mosca, conquering the torturing sensations of jealousy inspired by the attentions of that handsome coxcomb Count Baldi, wrote to the Duchess when he could not see her, giving her all the information he could extract from the future Baron Riva. What the Duchess needed to enable her to show a brave front in face of the dastardly rumors that were constantly being circulated concerning Fabrice was the society of a man of head and heart like Mosca. Baldi's nullity, by throwing her back on her own reflections, made existence a horror to her, and the Count could not always communicate the reasons that he had for being hopeful.

The Minister, alleging various specious reasons, had succeeded in convincing the

Digitized by Google

Prince that it would be well to deposit the documents bearing on the involved intrigues by means of which Ranuccio Ernesto IV entertained the wild hope of becoming constitutional king of Lombardy with a confederate of theirs, a nobleman whose château was situated near Sarono, in the very center of that fertile province. More than twenty of these compromising documents were in the Prince's writing or bore his signature, and the Count's idea was, if at any time Fabrice should seem to be in real peril, to inform His Highness of his intention to deliver the papers to one of the great powers that could crush him like an egg-shell.

Count Mosca thought he had the future Baron Riva safe under his thumb; all he feared was poison. Barbone's attempt had given him such a fright that he determined to risk a step of apparently doubtful wisdom. He presented himself at the entrance of the citadel one morning and sent for the Governor, who came down to the bastion over the sally-port, where, the pair walking amicably together arm in arm, after a few tart and ceremonious prefatory words the Count said to his companion:

"If Fabrice should die under suspicious

Digitized by Google

circumstances his death may be laid at my door; the world will ascribe it to the vengeance of a jealous man. That would be an abominable stain on my character, and one that I am resolved to leave nothing undone to prevent. I wish to tell you, therefore, that should he die of disease *I will kill you with my own hand;* you have your warning." General Conti made a magniloquent reply in which he had a great deal to say of his fearlessness, but it was long before the Count's glances ceased to haunt his memory.

A few days later, and as if he were acting in concert with the Count, the Fiscal Rassi committed a strange imprudence for a man of his character. The contempt with which he was everywhere greeted, and which made his name a byword with the multitude, had made him ill now that he saw a chance of escaping it. He sent General Fabio Conti an official copy of the sentence condemning Fabrice to twelve years' incarceration in the fortress. Had he obeyed the provisions of the law this is what he should have done on the day after Fabrice's reception within the prison; but the wonder was that in Parma, that country of secret measures, the tribunal should have proceeded to such lengths with-

Digitized by Google

out an express order from the sovereign. How, indeed, after an authenticated copy of the sentence had been promulgated from the fountain-head of justice, could they hope to daunt the Duchess's proud and fiery nature by those alternating hopes and fears of which we spoke but now? On the day preceding that on which he received the Fiscal's official communication General Conti learned that Barbone, the clerk, returning from the citadel late at night, had been beaten within an inch of his life. He concluded from this that there was no longer a desire in certain quarters that Fabrice should be put out of the way, and, with a prudence that saved Rassi from the immediate consequences of his indiscretion, the next time he had audience of the Prince he said nothing of the authenticated copy of the prisoner's sentence he had received. Fortunately for the poor Duchess's peace of mind the Count had discovered that Barbone's bungling attempt was only a measure of private vengeance, and he gave the clerk the indirect warning of which mention has been made.

Fabrice was agreeably surprised one Thursday when, after a hundred and thirty-five days' confinement in his narrow cell, the

Digitized by Google

good chaplain Don Cesare came to take him for a walk on the leads of the Farnèse Tower. The young man had not been on the roof ten minutes when, overcome by the freshness of the air, he had nearly fainted. Don Cesare made use of this incident to procure for him the privilege of a half-hour's open-air exercise every day. It was an unwise thing to do; the exercise soon restored to our hero a strength that he used for his own ends.

There were other serenades. The punctilious Governor only suffered them because they seemed in a manner to bind his daughter Clelia, whose attitude alarmed him; he had a vague feeling that there was no common meeting-ground between him and her, and was in constant dread of some rash action on her part. She might flee to a convent, and he would be deprived of his most effective weapon. And then, too, what if the music, whose tones penetrated the deepest dungeons, reserved for the most nefarious Liberals, should be a concerted language of signals? The musicians also were in themselves a cause of suspicion; the moment the serenade was ended they were marched off to the great rooms in the basement of the

Digitized by Google

palace, which by day served as offices for the prison staff, and there placed under lock and key, nor were they released until daybreak the following morning. The Governor would stand on the Bridge of the Slave and personally superintend the process of searching their persons; and in giving them their liberty he assured them, in his own forcible manner, that the first man Jack of them caught executing a commission for one of the prisoners should be hanged without benefit of clergy. And as it was known that in his desire to keep well with his superiors he was more than likely to be as good as his word, the result was that the Marquis Crescenzi could get no musicians to play for him without paying them threefold wages, to compensate them for the injury to their feelings resulting from their night's imprisonment.

All that the Duchess could obtain, and that not without infinite difficulty, from one of these pusillanimous fellows was that he would take charge of a letter for delivery to the Governor. It was addressed to Fabrice, and deplored the fatality that, during his five months of imprisonment, had entirely severed communication between him and his friends outside.

Digitized by Google

On entering the citadel the musician went down on his knees to General Fabio Conti and confessed that a priest, a total stranger, had accosted him and so vehemently urged and entreated him to take charge of a letter addressed to the Sieur del Dongo that he had been unable to refuse; but, knowing his duty, he made haste to turn it over to His Excellency.

His Excellency was highly pleased; he knew the extent of the resources that the Duchess had at her disposal, and had all along stood in fear of her wiles. Off he went in his joy to show the letter to the Prince, who was delighted.

"Good; the firmness of my administration has resulted as I desired. So the stiff-necked woman has had five months of suffering! Well, one of these fine days we will erect a gallows in the prison, and in her terrified imagination she 'll believe it intended for the little del Dongo."

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

XX

ONE night, about an hour after midnight, Fabrice was at his window, contemplating through the little wicket in the shutter the stars and the extensive prospect visible from the summit of the Farnèse Tower. His eyes, exploring the country in the direction of Ferrara and the lower Po, took note of a small but brilliant light, proceeding apparently from the top of a tower. "That light can't be seen from the plain," said Fabrice to himself; "it must be a signal intended for some distant point." All at once he noticed that the light appeared and vanished at brief and regular intervals. "Some young girl holding a conversation with her lover in the next village." He counted nine flashes in succession. "That is an I," he said to himself, I being the

Digitized by Google

ninth letter of the alphabet. Then there was a pause, succeeded by fourteen flashes: "That is an N;" another pause and a single flash: "That is an A; the word is *Ina*."

Imagine his wonder and delight when, on collocating the words formed by this primitive telegraphic system, he found them to make up the sentence:

INA PENSA A TE.

Gina is thinking of thee, of course!

He instantly replied in the same manner, flashing his lamp at the peep-hole in the shutter:

FABRICE LOVES THEE!

The correspondence was continued until day broke. That night was the one hundred and seventy-third of his captivity, and he was informed that this signaling had been going on nightly for four months. But the scheme was liable to be detected and curious eyes might read their messages; that very night they began to frame a system of arbitraries: thus, the light displayed three times in rapid succession stood for the Duchess; four flashes meant the Prince; two, the Count; two rapid flashes followed by two slow ones, *escape*, and so on. It was agreed that in the future they were to use

Digitized by Google

the old alphabet *alla Monaca,* which changes the regular order of the letters and gives them arbitrary numbers; A, for instance, becoming number ten, B number three, etc., so that three successive concealments of the light mean B, ten mean A, and so forth; a moment of darkness indicated the termination of a word. An appointment was made for the following night at one o'clock, when the Duchess came in person to the tower, which was something less than a mile from the city. Tears rose to her eyes as she saw the signals made by her dear nephew, whom she had so often bewailed as dead. She took the lamp in her hand and conversed with him, encouraging him with cheering words: *I love you; have courage; good health; hope on. Take exercise; you will need your strength.* "I have not seen him since la Fausta's concert," said the Duchess to herself, "when he stood at the door of my salon dressed as a chasseur. Who would have believed then that fate had such things in store for us!"

The Duchess directed signals made informing Fabrice that he was soon to be set at liberty, THANKS TO THE CLEMENCY OF THE PRINCE (their messages might be inter-

Digitized by Google

cepted); then she reverted to expressions of comfort and affection; it seemed as if she would never be able to tear herself away. It was only at the urgent instances of Ludovic, whom she had made her factotum because of his services to Fabrice, that she finally consented, when day was near at hand, to discontinue her telegraphing, which might have attracted the attention of Mme. Raversi's spies. The announcement, more than once repeated, of his approaching deliverance, had the effect of making the young man thoughtful and very sad. Clelia, observing his melancholy next day, was so incautious as to inquire its cause.

"I fear I am about to give the Duchess serious cause of displeasure."

"Why, what could she ask of you that you would not grant?" cried Clelia, manifesting the liveliest curiosity.

"She wishes me to leave this prison," he replied, "and that is a thing which I shall refuse to do."

Clelia was unable to speak a word; she looked at him and burst into tears. Had he only been able to converse with her orally just then he might have obtained an avowal of sentiments the uncertainty as to which

Digitized by Google

had caused him many bitter moments of discouragement. He felt that life without Clelia's love would indeed be "flat, stale, and unprofitable." It seemed to him that to live merely for the sake of those pleasures that had filled up his empty moments before he knew what love was was a barren and irrational proceeding; and although suicide had not as yet come to be the fashion in Italy, he had thought of it as a possible resource in case fate should part him and Clelia.

The next day he received from her a long letter.

"You should know the truth, my friend. Many times, since you have been residing within these walls, the belief has prevailed at Parma that your last day was come. It is true that your sentence only condemns you to imprisonment for twelve years, but it is also impossible to deny, unfortunately, that you are the object of the implacable hatred of those high in authority; and again and again I have trembled at the anticipation of hearing you had been taken off by poison. I entreat you, therefore, use every means within your power to get away from here. You see that for your sake I disregard the most sacred duties. You may form an idea

Digitized by Google

of the imminence of the danger by the temerity of the things I am writing to you, and which fall with such ill grace from my lips. If it becomes necessary, if you have no other means of assuring your safety, fly. Every moment that you spend in this fortress is attended with danger to your life. Remember that there is a faction at court that never hesitates at crime in the prosecution of its designs. And can you not see how all the projects of that faction are constantly thwarted by the superior ability of Count Mosca? His enemies would be overjoyed to banish him from Parma, and a means to that end exists in the despair of Mme. Sanseverina; and what is more likely to induce that despair than the death of a certain young prisoner? This suggestion, which is unanswerable, should enable you to estimate your situation. You assert that you entertain a friendly feeling for me; but remember that there are insurmountable obstacles in the way of this sentiment ever developing into anything more serious between us. We met when we were young; we extended a helping hand to each other in our days of misfortune. Destiny, by placing me within these stern walls, has given me

Digitized by Google

the power to somewhat alleviate your discomforts; but I shall never cease to reproach myself if illusions for which there is not and never can be the slightest foundation shall deter you from using every effort to save yourself from the frightful peril which menaces your life. My imprudence in exchanging with you some tokens of sympathy and fellowship has cost me my peace of mind. I might attempt to justify myself in my own eyes by recalling Barbone's wicked attempt, but it would be in vain if our innocent conversations with the alphabets have inspired in you illusions for which there is so little foundation and which may prove so fatal to you. If what you say is true, while trying to save you from a passing danger I was leading you into a peril infinitely more terrible, more lasting; and if in my imprudence I am responsible for sentiments which may cause you to disregard the Duchess's counsels, I shall feel there is no pardon for me. See what you compel me to repeat—fly, I command you, fly!"

The letter was of great length; there were passages in it which gave Fabrice some delicious moments of joy and hopefulness. It seemed to him that, if it was worded with

Digitized by Google

remarkable caution, its general tone was one of tenderness. There were other moments when he had to pay the penalty of his complete ignorance of this description of warfare; he could see nothing more than simple friendship, or even the most ordinary humanity, in Clelia's letter.

However, all her instances did not avail one jot to change his determination. Supposing all the perils she depicted to be true, was it paying too high a price to purchase with some trifling risks the felicity of seeing her every day? What kind of life would he lead when he should be safely settled at Florence or Bologna? For it was not to be expected that after escaping from the citadel permission would be granted him to live at Parma. And even if the Prince should do so unheard-of a thing as to give him his liberty—which was altogether improbable, seeing that it was on him, Fabrice, that a powerful clique relied to effect Count Mosca's overthrow—what kind of life would he lead at Parma, parted from his Clelia by the wide gulf of hatred that divided the two parties? Once or twice a month, perhaps, chance would bring them together on the common ground of some neutral salon; but

Digitized by Google

even then what manner of conversation could he have with her? How was he to regain that tender familiarity, that sweet communion of souls that he now enjoyed during some hours of every day? What would the conversation of the salon amount to compared with that which they used to carry on with the assistance of the alphabet? And if he were to purchase this life of enchantment and this sole hope of happiness at the cost of some insignificant risks, where would be the harm? And would it not be an additional happiness to have a slight opportunity of affording her a proof of his love?

Fabrice saw in Clelia's letter a favorable opportunity to ask her for an interview; it had long been the constant and dearest object of his desires. He had mentioned the subject to her only once, and then only for a moment, soon after his arrival at the prison; and more than two hundred days had elapsed since then.

A device occurred to him whereby he and Clelia might meet. Through the kindness of good Don Cesare he was allowed to walk for half an hour every Thursday on the terrace of the Farnèse Tower in the daytime; but on

Digitized by Google

other days of the week this promenade, which might be observed by the citizens of Parma and compromise the Governor, was deferred until after dark. The only means of reaching the terrace was by a staircase in the belfry attached to the small chapel, which the reader may possibly remember on account of its fantastic and funereal decorations in black and white marble. Grillo would conduct Fabrice to the chapel and unlock the door of the belfry; it was his duty, also, to attend him during his outing, but as the evenings were beginning to be cool the turnkey generally left him to his devices and returned to his comfortable room after turning the key in the lock of the belfry door. What could be more simple than that Clelia, attended by her maid, should chance some fine evening to visit the black marble chapel?

The long letter with which Fabrice answered Clelia's was written wholly with the view of securing this interview. He also took up his reasons for refusing to leave his prison-house, and discussed them with perfect sincerity and as impersonally as if he had been speaking of some one else.

"I would expose myself daily to the pros-

Digitized by Google

pect of a thousand deaths for the happiness of a few minutes' conversation with you through our alphabets, in the use of which we are now so perfect, and you wish me to satisfy myself by flying to Florence or Bologna! You would put miles of distance between me and you! I must tell you that such an effort is beyond my strength; I might promise, but I could never keep my word."

The result of this audacious request was that Clelia did not show herself for five days; for five long days she came to the aviary only at such times as she knew Fabrice would be debarred from using the peep-hole in the shutter. The young man was reduced to despair; the conclusion he drew from the girl's absence was that, notwithstanding certain looks that at times had excited in him delirious anticipations, the only sentiment he had inspired in her bosom was one of simple friendship. "That being the case," he said to himself, "of what value is my life? Let the Prince take it; he is welcome to it." And it was with a sensation of profound disgust that night after night he answered the signals of the lamp. The Duchess thought him altogether daft when she read among

Digitized by Google

the messages, a report of which Ludovic brought her every morning, "*I have no desire to escape; I wish to die here.*"

During those five days of cruel torture to Fabrice, Clelia was even more wretched than he; she was possessed by this idea, so distressing to a generous soul: "My duty is to fly and take refuge in a convent, many leagues from here. When Fabrice learns that I am no longer in the citadel—and I will take care that he is informed by Grillo and the other jailers—he will decide to attempt an escape." But flight to a convent was equivalent to renouncing all hope of ever seeing Fabrice again; and how could she do that now that he had given such positive proof that whatever sentiments he might once have entertained for the Duchess had ceased to exist! What more touching proof of love could a young man give? After seven long months of captivity, which had seriously impaired his health, he refused to accept his liberty. A Lothario, such as the courtiers had represented Fabrice to be, would sacrifice twenty mistresses to save a single day's imprisonment, and what would he not do to escape from a confinement where his life was daily threatened by the poisoner!

Digitized by Google

Clelia's courage failed her; she made the great mistake of not retiring to a convent, which would at the same time have given her an opportunity of breaking with the Marquis Crescenzi. The mistake once made, what further resistance could she oppose to so amiable, so natural, so affectionate a young man, who persisted in imperiling his life merely for the pleasure of contemplating her from his window? After five days of terrible internal conflict, in which she lashed herself with the whip of self-contempt, Clelia finally decided to answer the letter in which Fabrice solicited the boon of an interview in the black marble chapel. True it was she denied his request, and that in pretty severe terms; but from that moment her peace of mind was gone; her imagination was constantly presenting to her Fabrice succumbing to the effects of poison. She visited the aviary a dozen times a day, impelled by a passionate desire to convince herself that Fabrice was in the land of the living.

"If he is still within prison walls," she said to herself, "if he is likely to become the victim of the murderous plots of the Raversi faction in their desire to disgrace Count Mosca, it is solely owing to my cowardice in

Digitized by Google

not retreating to a convent. What pretext would he have had for remaining here once he was assured that I was gone never to return?"

This girl, so timid and at the same time so proud, laid herself open to the indignity of being snubbed by the turnkey Grillo; worse yet, she exposed herself to the comments the fellow might see fit to make on the strangeness of her conduct. She so far humiliated herself as to send for him and tell him in trembling tones that betrayed her secret that within a few days Fabrice was to have his liberty; that the Duchess Sanseverina was using her best efforts to secure that end; that it was often necessary to have an immediate answer from the prisoner to certain propositions made him. In view of these considerations she wanted him, Grillo, to permit Fabrice to cut a hole in the screen that covered his window in order that she might communicate to him by signs the information that she was in the habit of receiving several times a day from Mme. Sanseverina.

Grillo smiled and gave her assurance of his respect and readiness to obey her wishes. Clelia was thankful to him for saying nothing further; it was clear that he had a

Digitized by Google

shrewd idea of what had been going on under his nose during the last few months.

The jailer had no more than left her presence than Clelia made the usual signal that summoned Fabrice on occasions of importance. She told him what she had just done. "It is your wish to die by poison," she added; "I trust some day to find the courage to leave my father and shut myself in some remote convent. That will be your doing. I hope that then you will cease to resist your friends' plans for getting you away from here. As long as you are here I am compelled to suffer torments that I have done nothing to deserve. I have never harmed a living soul, and it seems to me that I shall be responsible for your death. Such thoughts concerning a perfect stranger would reduce me to despair. Judge what I must suffer when I see a friend, of whose perverseness I have just reason to complain, but whom I have been associating with daily for such a length of time, threatened by an immediate and most horrible death. There are times when I cannot feel satisfied without hearing from your own lips that you are alive.

"It was to spare myself that frightful

Digitized by Google

suffering that I lowered myself to ask a favor from an underling, who might have refused me and who may still betray me. However, it would not be an unmixed evil should he denounce me to my father; I should then set out at once for the convent; I should cease to be the involuntary accomplice of your folly and madness. But take my word for it, matters cannot go on in this way for long—you will end by obeying the Duchess's orders. And now, cruel friend, will you be satisfied? The daughter solicits you to betray the father! Summon Grillo and give him money."

Fabrice was so fast in the toils of love, he received the simplest expression of Clelia's will with such awe, that even this remarkable communication did not give him perfect assurance that he was loved. He summoned Grillo, whom he paid liberally for past favors, and promised him that in the future he should have a sequin for each day that he winked at the use of the peep-hole in the shutter. Grillo was glad to ratify the treaty.

"I am going to talk to you plainly, Monsignor. Can you put up with eating a cold dinner every day? It is the safest way to escape being poisoned. But I must ask of

Digitized by Google

you the profoundest secrecy; it 's a jailer's business to see everything and repeat nothing of what he sees," etc., etc. "Instead of one dog I shall have several, and you must see that they taste each dish from which you propose eating. As for the wine, I will send you up some of mine; leave untouched the bottles from which I have not drunk. But unless Your Excellency wishes to ruin me, don't breathe a word of these matters, even to the Signorina Clelia. Women are women; if she should have a fuss with you to-day, off she goes to-morrow and tells the whole story to her father, who would like nothing better than a chance to hang a turnkey. After Barbone, he is the meanest man to deal with in the citadel, and therein lies the real danger of your position. He knows the use of poisons, you may rest assured, and he would never forgive me for suggesting that little scheme about the dogs."

There was another serenade. Grillo's gratitude to Fabrice now led him to answer all his questions, with a mental reservation, however, to be cautious and say nothing to injure the signorina, who, as he told himself, while about to marry the Marquis Crescenzi, the richest man in all the States of Parma,

Digitized by Google

none the less liked to have her little love-passages with the agreeable Monsignore del Dongo, so far as restraints of prison walls allowed. He had answered all the latter's questions about the serenade, when he was so thoughtless as to add, "It is said they are to be married before long." The effect of the few words on Fabrice may be imagined. His only response to the signals of the lamp that night was that he was ill. On Clelia's appearance in the aviary next morning about ten o'clock he asked her in a tone of frigid politeness that she had never heard him use before why she had never told him of her love for the Marquis Crescenzi, and that she was about to be married to him.

"Because there is not a word of truth in the story," Clelia replied, impatiently. It is true that the remainder of her answer was less explicit. Fabrice noticed this and spoke of it, and at the same time renewed his request for an interview. Clelia, stung to hear her good faith questioned, granted it with scarcely an objection, at the same time reminding him that he was dishonoring her forever in Grillo's eyes. That night, when the darkness was complete, Clelia made her appearance in the chapel, accompanied by

Digitized by Google

her maid. She took her station near the little lamp that was kept burning in the center of the edifice; the maid and Grillo retreated to the door. Clelia, all of a tremble, had prepared what she had to say; her object was to avoid compromising admissions; but the logic of passion is irresistible; in its ravenous hunger for the truth it sweeps away evasions and concealments, while at the same time its devotion for the loved object obliterates the fear of offending. Fabrice, who for nearly eight months had been living in the company of jailers, was dazzled by Clelia's loveliness. But his fury came back to him at mention of Crescenzi's name, and it increased tenfold when he saw that Clelia was carefully arranging her replies. Clelia herself saw that she was adding to his suspicions instead of dispelling them. The sensation was too cruel to be endured.

"Do you think you will be the happier," she sadly said, while her eyes filled with tears, "for making me forget the duty I owe my father and myself? Up to the 3d of August of the year just past my only feeling for the men who sought to win my favor was one of repulsion. The courtier inspired in me an extreme and probably an unjustifi-

Digitized by Google

able contempt; I hated the court, its follies and wickedness. On the other hand, I was strangely attracted by a prisoner who was introduced into the citadel on the 3d of August. I experienced, without acknowledging it to myself at first, all the torments of jealousy. The attractions of a charming woman, to me no stranger, were so many stabs implanted in my heart, because I thought, and still think, that the young prisoner had a fondness for her. Before long the Marquis Crescenzi, who had sought my hand in marriage, redoubled his persecutions. He is very rich, we have nothing. I refused to accept his attentions, whereon my father threatened me with the convent. If I left the citadel I knew that I should be unable longer to look after the safety of the captive in whose fate I was so deeply interested. I had laid my plans so well that thus far he had no suspicion of the great peril he was in. I had vowed to myself that I would never betray either my father or my secret; but the woman I spoke of, endowed with abilities of the highest order, untiring activity, and an indomitable will, the prisoner's friend and protector, offered him, as I believe, facilities for escaping; he declined

Digitized by Google

her offers, and tried to convince me that his reason for refusing to leave the citadel was his wish not to be parted from me. It was then I made a great mistake; I struggled with myself for five long days. What I should have done was to leave the citadel at once and bury myself in a convent; it would have been a simple and effective way of disposing of the Marquis Crescenzi. I could not find courage to do it, and I am lost; I have formed an attachment for a man whom it is unsafe to trust. I know what his conduct was at Naples, and what reason have I to believe he has changed since then? A prisoner strictly guarded, he made love to the only woman he had an opportunity of seeing; she was a means of beguiling the tedious hours of his confinement. The difficulties he encountered in having communication with her deluded him into the belief that this pastime was a genuine passion. The prisoner, who has earned a reputation for courage in the world, thinks to prove that his love is something more than a fancy of the moment by affronting serious perils that he may continue to see the person whom he imagines that he loves; but place him in a great city, surrounded by the allurements of society, he

Digitized by Google

will be once more what he has always been —a man of the world, addicted to gallantry and dissipation; while his poor companion of the prison will end her days in a convent, forgotten by her fickle lover, and tortured by regret that in her weakness she made him this confession."

As may be imagined, this long historical narrative, of which we have given only the principal features, was not received by Fabrice without many interruptions. Being insanely in love, he was firmly convinced that before seeing Clelia he had never known what it was to love, and that his life's destiny was to live for her alone. We leave it to the reader to imagine all the fine speeches he was making her, when the maid broke in on them by warning her mistress that half-past eleven had struck and the General was likely to return at any moment. The parting was harrowing.

"This may be the last time I shall see you," said Clelia to the prisoner; "some sudden action on the part of the Raversi cabal may afford you a terrible means of proving your constancy." Her form was convulsed by sobs as she took leave of Fabrice, and she was ready to drop for

Digitized by Google

shame that she could not entirely conceal them from her maid, and especially from Grillo. Another meeting would be impossible until such time as the General should announce beforehand his intention of leaving home; and as, since Fabrice's presence in the fortress, he had seen fit to have an almost uninterrupted attack of the gout, his visits to the city were generally made on the spur of the moment, as political exigencies demanded.

After that evening in the marble chapel Fabrice's life was one uninterrupted transport. True, there were many and serious obstacles to be met and overcome before the completion of his happiness, but then he had the supreme and scarcely hoped-for joy of knowing he was loved by the divine creature who filled his thoughts.

On the third night after this interview the signals of the lamp ended early, not long after midnight; just as they were concluded Fabrice was startled by a great leaden ball which, entering the screen at its top, where it was open, came rattling and bounding down the planks and fell on the floor of his chamber.

The ball was not nearly as heavy as its

Digitized by Google

bulk seemed to promise. Fabrice opened it without difficulty and found it contained a letter from the Duchess. With the assistance of the Archbishop, whose foibles she humored with infinite tact, she had seduced a soldier belonging to the garrison of the citadel. This man, an expert manipulator of the sling, either eluded the vigilance of the sentries posted around the Governor's palace or else debauched them.

"You will have to make your escape with ropes," the Duchess wrote. "I shudder at having to give you this advice, which I have been pondering over for the last two months; but the official skies are darkening every day, and there is reason to fear the worst. By the way, take your lamp and signal immediately to let us know you have received this dangerous letter; show P, B, and G, *alla Monaca*—that is, four, twelve, and two; until I have seen this signal I shall not dare to breathe. I am at the tower; the answer will be N and O—seven and five. This done, make no more signals; occupy yourself exclusively with reading and mastering my letter."

Fabrice hastened to obey, and made the appointed signals, which were followed by

Digitized by Google

the proper answers; then he went on with the perusal of the letter.

"There is reason to fear the worst. That is what I was told by the three men in whom I have most confidence, after I had made them swear on the Gospels to tell me all the truth, whatever the terrors it might have for me. The first of these three men is he who threatened to inflict summary vengeance on the surgeon who betrayed you at Ferrara; the second is he who told you it would have been more prudent to pistol the domestic who came on you in a wood singing and leading a lean horse; the third you do not know; he is a highwayman and a great friend of mine, a man of nerve and mettle if there was ever one, and possessed of a courage equal to your own; that is why I asked him to tell me what you ought to do. All three told me, each without knowing that I had consulted the other two, that it would be better to risk a broken neck than to spend eleven years and four months more in prison and take the chances of being poisoned.

"You must devote a month in your cell to practising climbing on a knotted rope. After that, at the first favorable opportunity —a holiday will be best, when the troops

Digitized by Google

have been given an extra allowance of wine —you are to attempt the great stroke. You will be furnished with three ropes, made of silk and hemp, and of the thickness of a swan's quill; the first, eighty feet in length, for the descent of the thirty-five feet from your window to the orange-trees; the second, three hundred feet long—its weight is a serious drawback, but there 's no remedy for it—to descend the hundred and eighty-four feet, the height of the wall of the great tower; a third, of thirty feet, will be for use at the rampart. I am devoting all my days to studying the wall on the eastern side—on the side toward Ferrara, that is. A breach caused by an earthquake has been filled by means of a buttress forming an inclined plane. My highwayman assures me he would be willing to eat his head if he could not escape in that direction simply by sliding down the buttress; the only damage he fears is some loss of cuticle. The vertical height is only twenty-eight feet to the bottom. This side is less closely guarded.

"However, surveying the matter in all its aspects, my robber, who has thrice escaped from prison, and whom I 'm sure you would love if you knew him, although he tells me he

Digitized by Google

can't abide men of your cloth—my highwayman, I say, agile and daring like yourself, thinks he would prefer to take his chances on the western side, just opposite the little villa once occupied by la Fausta, with whom I believe you had some acquaintance. The reason that inclines him to favor this side is that the wall, though it has but little slope, is pretty thickly covered with brambles; there are stubs and spikes of wood, thick as one's little finger, which would flay a man in less than no time if he were not careful, but which are also excellent to hold on by. No later than this morning I was examining the western wall through an excellent glass; the most promising spot is just under the place where a new stone was set into the balustrade two or three years ago. Vertically beneath this stone you will find a bare spot of some twenty feet; you will have to proceed with great caution there (I leave you to imagine what my feelings are while giving you these terrible instructions, but true courage consists in the ability to choose the least of two evils, however fearful it may be); after the bare spot you will come to eighty or ninety feet of flourishing brambles, among which the birds have nested, and then a space of

Digitized by Google

thirty feet where there are only wall-flowers, grass, and creepers. Then, as you continue descending toward the ground, you will meet with twenty feet more of brambles, and finally a strip of twenty-five or thirty feet where the wall has been newly whitewashed.

"What would influence me to choose this side is that vertically beneath the new stone in the balustrade above stands a little wooden shanty erected by a soldier in his garden-plot, and that the captain of engineers stationed at the fortress is trying to compel him to tear down; it is seventeen feet high, and its thatched roof almost grazes the wall of the citadel. It is that roof which tempts me; it would break one's fall in case of accident. Once you reach there you are within the enceinte of the ramparts, which are not guarded over carefully. Should any one attempt to stop you, pull out your pistols, blaze away, and stand your ground as long as possible. Your Ferrara friend and another daredevil—he whom I call my highwayman—will be there with ladders, and won't be slow in scaling the rampart and coming to your rescue.

"The rampart is only twenty-three feet high, and the slope of the glacis is easy. I

Digitized by Google

shall be at the foot of the wall last named with a following of armed men.

"I hope to get other letters to you by the same route as this. I shall repeat the same things in other terms, so that there may be no misunderstanding as to details. Judge my feelings when I tell you that the man who would have had you pistol the domestic —he is as good-hearted a creature as I ever saw, and is truly penitent—thinks you will come off with a broken arm. The highway robber, who has had more experience in affairs of this kind, is of opinion that if you will only make the descent slowly and not hurry, your liberty will cost you no more than a few contusions and abrasions. The great difficulty will be how to get the ropes to you. I have thought of nothing else for the last two weeks during which this grand idea has occupied my mind.

"I shall say nothing to that absurd saying—the only really foolish thing that I ever knew you to utter: 'I do not wish to escape.' The man who favored shooting the domestic declares you could not have been in your right mind when you said it. I shall not attempt to conceal from you that we are apprehending a very imminent danger, which may make it

Digitized by Google

necessary to advance the day of your flight. To warn you of this danger the lamp will say several times in succession:

"'*The castle is on fire!*'

"You will reply:

"'*Are my books burned?*'"

The letter comprised five or six additional pages of detail; it was written in microscopic characters on very thin paper.

"That is all very fine and very ingeniously conceived," said Fabrice, "and I am extremely obliged to the Count and the Duchess; perhaps they will think I am afraid, but I shan't attempt to run away. Who ever thinks of abandoning a spot where he is as happy as he can be for another spot that will be to him a desert and a solitude, where everything will be wanting, even air to breathe? What should I do at the end of a month in Florence? I should disguise myself and come prowling round my prison, hoping to spy *her* at the window."

The next day Fabrice had a fright. It was about eleven o'clock, and he was at his peep-hole gazing out on the splendid landscape while awaiting the blest moment of Clelia's appearance, when Grillo entered the room in a breathless state.

Digitized by Google

"Quick, quick, Monsignor! throw yourself on the bed and pretend you are sick; here are three judges coming up the stairs! They are going to examine you; reflect well before answering; they will try to put you in a hole."

So saying, Grillo hastily closed the trap in the shutter, pushed Fabrice back upon the bed, and covered him over with some wraps.

"Say you are suffering, and talk little; make them repeat their questions to gain time for reflection."

The three judges entered the room. "They are no judges; three fugitives from the galleys, rather," said Fabrice to himself as he took note of their repulsive faces. They wore long black stuff gowns. They bowed gravely, and without a word of apology took possession of the three chairs that were in the room.

"Signor Fabrice del Dongo," said the eldest of the trio, "it grieves us to be the bearers of sorrowful tidings to you. We are here to announce the death of His Excellency the Marquis del Dongo, your father, Second Grand Majordomo, Major in the service of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom, Knight Grand Cross of the Orders of ——" etc., etc.,

Digitized by Google

Fabrice burst into tears. The judge continued:

"Your mother, Madame la Marquise del Dongo, communicates this intelligence to you through the medium of a letter; but as she has seen fit to supplement the missive with certain irrelevant reflections, it was decreed yesterday by the High Court of Justice that only portions of this letter should be imparted to you; those extracts the clerk Bona will now proceed to read."

The reading finished, the judge approached the recumbent Fabrice, and taking his mother's letter from his pocket, exhibited to him those passages of which copies had just been read. Fabrice caught sight of the expressions *unjust detention, cruel and excessive punishment for a crime that was no crime,* and saw through the motive of the judges' visit. All he said, in his contempt for the dishonest and venal magistrates, was:

"I am ill, gentlemen; I feel extremely weak and faint. You will excuse me for not rising."

Fabrice continued to weep after the judges had taken their departure; at last, drying his eyes, he said to himself, "Am I a hypocrite? It always seemed to me I did not love him."

Digitized by Google

Clelia was much depressed on that and the succeeding days; she summoned him to the window several times, but scarcely had heart to say a word. On the morning of the fifth day after their first interview she informed him that she would be in the marble chapel that evening.

"I shall not be able to speak with you for long," she said when they met. She trembled so that she was obliged to seek the support of her maid's arm. When she had recovered somewhat, and had dismissed the attendant to the entrance of the chapel, "You will give me your word of honor," she continued, in accents hardly audible—"you will give me your word of honor that you will obey the Duchess and make an effort to escape on the day and in the manner she shall indicate, else to-morrow morning I seek the shelter of a convent, and never so long as I live will speak to you again."

Fabrice was speechless.

"Promise," said Clelia, as if beside herself, tears streaming from her eyes—"promise, or else this is our last meeting. The life you are compelling me to lead is unendurable. You persist in remaining here on my account, and every day may be the last of your existence."

Digitized by Google

At this juncture Clelia's strength failed her so that she was forced to rest on the back of a great fauteuil that had been introduced into the chapel in bygone days for the use of the captive prince; she narrowly escaped fainting.

"What must I promise?" Fabrice mournfully asked.

"You know."

"Very well; I swear that hereafter I will live apart from all I hold dear on earth, and will rush with open eyes to embrace a fate that I know means certain misery."

"Not so; promise explicitly."

"I swear to obey the Duchess, and to fly when and in whatever manner she may direct me. And what is to become of me when I no longer have you near me?"

"Swear that you will fly the prison, happen what may."

"What! that you may marry the Marquis Crescenzi when I am gone?"

"O God above! for what kind of creature do you take me? But swear; until you do my mind will know no peace."

"Well, then, I pledge myself to attempt my escape from here on the day appointed by Mme. Sanseverina, no matter what may happen in the interim."

Digitized by Google

Clelia had gained her point, but was so exhausted that, having thanked Fabrice, she was obliged to leave the chapel.

"All was prepared for my flight to-morrow morning had you proved obdurate," she said to him. "I should have looked on you to-night for the last time—I had sworn it before the Madonna. As soon as I am fit to leave my room I shall go and inspect that portion of the wall where you are to make your perilous attempt."

Her pallor when she appeared at the window of the aviary next day caused him serious anxiety. She said to him:

"Let us not be blind to the truth, dear friend; as our friendship is alloyed with sin, so, I doubt not, sorrow and suffering are in store for us. You will be discovered in attempting to escape, and your hopes irretrievably blasted, if nothing worse. Still, human prudence dictates the step, and its behests must be obeyed. You will need for the descent of the great tower a strong rope more than two hundred feet in length. With all my efforts since I was first apprised of the Duchess's plan, I have only been able to get together about fifty feet. By order of the Governor all bits of rope found lying about

Digitized by Google

the fortress are burned, and the well-ropes—which, moreover, are so weak that they often break while raising their light burden—are removed from the pulleys every night. But pray that God may forgive me; I am betraying my father, unnatural daughter that I am, and doing that which will cause him incurable grief and sorrow. Pray to God for me, and, if your life be spared, resolve that you will devote every instant of it to His glory.

"Here is an idea that occurred to me. In about a week I am to leave the fortress to attend the wedding of one of the Marquis Crescenzi's sisters. I shall return the same evening, of course, but will do my best to make my return as late as possible, and I must trust to Barbone's not being too inquisitive. All the great ladies of the court will be at the wedding, among them, doubtless, Mme. Sanseverina. Can you not arrange with one of those ladies to have a long, strong, slender rope upon her person, done up as compactly as possible, and hand it to me secretly? At the risk of a thousand deaths I would use every effort, no matter how dangerous, to introduce the package within the citadel, regardless, alas! of my most sacred duties. Should it come to my

Digitized by Google

father's knowledge I would never see you more; but happen what may, I shall find my reward of happiness in doing what I can to serve you within the limits of sisterly affection."

That same evening Fabrice advised the Duchess by means of their signaling apparatus of the opportunity that offered of introducing a sufficient supply of rope into the fortress. But he begged her to keep the matter secret, even from the Count, which appeared to her unaccountable. "He is a little off," the Duchess thought; "the prison air does not agree with him; he takes tragic views of things." The next morning another leaden ball, hurled by the slingsman's vigorous arm, brought to the prisoner tidings of the imminency of a greater danger than any that had gone before. The person who should introduce the ropes, the letter said, would surely be the means of saving his life. Fabrice hastened to Clelia with the news. Inclosed in the ball was also an accurate sketch of the western wall, by which he was to effect his descent into the space comprised between the bastions. From this spot the escape would be comparatively easy, the rampart, as the reader will remember, be-

Digitized by Google

ing only twenty-three feet high. On the back of the sketch, written in a minute and elegant hand, was a noble sonnet. In eloquent terms the writer exhorted Fabrice to fly, and not allow his soul to be debased and his body wasted by the eleven years of captivity that remained for him to suffer.

Just here a necessary detail, which will in part account for the Duchess's courage in counseling Fabrice to such dangerous measures, compels us to interrupt for a moment the narrative of this desperate undertaking.

Like all parties which are not in power, the Raversi faction was not entirely harmonious. The Chevalier Riscara had a grudge against the Fiscal Rassi, to whom he attributed the loss of an important lawsuit in which, to tell the truth, Riscara was in the wrong. Through Riscara's means the Prince was notified anonymously that an authenticated copy of Fabrice's sentence had been sent to the governor of the citadel. The Marquise Raversi, that astute party leader, was excessively annoyed by this underhand proceeding, and at once took steps to put her friend the Fiscal General on his guard. It seemed to her quite natural that he should wish to make all he could out of the Minister Mosca

Digitized by Google

while Mosca was in power. Rassi presented himself unblushingly at the palace, thinking he should go scot-free after receiving a few kicks; the Prince could not get along without a skilful jurist, and Rassi had lately exiled, on the ground of their political opinions, a lawyer and a judge, the only men in the country capable of filling his place.

The Prince, beside himself with anger, loaded him with abuse and came forward to give him a beating.

"It was a clerk's mistake, that 's all," replied Rassi, cool as you please. "The thing is enjoined by law; it should have been done the day after del Dongo's incarceration in the citadel. The over-zealous clerk thought there had been an oversight; I suppose he gave me the letter and I signed it, believing it to be in the ordinary routine of business."

"Do you expect me to believe such stupid, silly lies?" roared the Prince, at a white heat. "Be a man and confess you have sold yourself to that scoundrel Mosca, and it was for that you received the cross. But by my name, you sha'n't get off with a beating this time; I will bring you to trial; I will dismiss you ignominiously."

"Bring me to trial! I defy you to do it,"

Digitized by Google

Rassi replied, with assurance; he knew it was the quickest way of bringing the Prince to reason. "The law is on my side, and you have not another Rassi to help you cheat it. And you won't dismiss me, because there are moments when you incline to severity; you thirst for blood on those occasions; but on the whole you are desirous of preserving the esteem of the moderate Italians; that esteem is a *sine qua non* of your ambition. And so, even if you should dismiss me, you will recall me the first time the more cruel part of your nature is in the ascendant. I shall obtain for you, as usual, a sentence from the timid and reputedly honest judges that does not transgress the letter of the law, and your bloodthirsty passions will be satisfied. Where in your dominions will you find another as useful man as I?"

With which words Rassi took to his heels; he had escaped with half a dozen kicks and one cut from an office ruler conscientiously applied. On leaving the palace he set out for his house at Riva, not being entirely free from apprehensions of assassination while the sovereign's anger was in its early stage, but feeling equally certain, on the other hand, of being recalled to the capital before

Digitized by Google

he was two weeks older. His time at Riva was spent in perfecting a cipher code for corresponding with Count Mosca. He hankered for the baronial title, and believed that the Prince had too much respect for that splendid relic of antiquity, nobility, ever to confer it on him; while the Count, though very proud of his birth, attached no value to nobility unless it rested on titles granted prior to the year 1400.

The Fiscal General had not erred in his predictions. He had been enjoying country air little more than a week when a friend of the Prince's, dropping in on him by chance, advised him to return to Parma without delay. The Prince received him good-naturedly, then assumed a solemn air and bade him swear on the holy Gospel not to reveal what he was about to say to him. Rassi took the oath with a straight face, and the Prince, his eyes blazing with hatred, declared that as long as Fabrice remained alive he should never be master in his own dominions.

"I can neither expel the Duchess from the city nor endure her presence," he added; "she braves me with her looks, and makes life a burden to me."

Digitized by Google

When he had allowed the Prince to state his case at length, he, Rassi, affecting extreme embarrassment, finally said:

"Your Highness shall be obeyed, of course; but there are tremendous difficulties connected with the affair. There is no likelihood of obtaining a death-sentence against a del Dongo for the murder of a Giletti; it was little short of miraculous that we did as well as we did, and sent him to the fortress for twelve years. It has been intimated to me, moreover, that the Duchess has unearthed three of the men who were working in the trenches at Sanguigna that day and were outside the excavation at the moment when that ruffian Giletti assaulted del Dongo."

"And where are those fellows now?" the Prince angrily inquired.

"In hiding somewhere in Piedmont, I suppose. It would require a conspiracy against Your Highness's life to have them extradited."

"The method has its dangers; the pretense is too apt to make men think of the reality."

"But that is the only method my official arsenal can furnish," said Rassi, feigning innocence.

Digitized by Google

"There is poison."

"But who is there to give it? That idiot Conti?"

"It would not be his first attempt, if all I hear is true."

"He would have to be roused to the sticking-point," Rassi replied; "besides, when he did for the captain he was in love and under thirty years old; he was not such a pusillanimous creature in those days as he is now. Of course, all considerations should bow to the will of the sovereign, but really, taken unprepared as I am, and without leisure to consider the matter fully, the only person I can think of to carry out Your Highness's wishes is a fellow named Barbone, clerk of the prison, whom the Sieur del Dongo floored with a blow of his fist on the first day of his appearance there."

The Prince having recovered his equanimity, the conversation was protracted to great length; it ended in the sovereign granting his law officer a delay of one month; he had asked for two. The next day Rassi received a gratuity of one thousand sequins. Three days he devoted to reflection; on the fourth he decided to adhere to his original plan of action, which seemed to him best for the

Digitized by Google

reasons: "*Primo*, of the two Count Mosca is the more likely to keep his promises, because in making me a baron he is giving something on which he sets no value; *secundo*, by betraying His Highness's plans to him I shall be spared the commission of a crime for which I have been fairly well paid in advance; *tertio*, I shall be avenging the first kicks and cuffs received by the Chevalier Rassi." In less than four and twenty hours he had communicated to the Minister his entire conversation with the Prince.

The Count continued to lay siege to the inflexible Duchess; true, he was allowed to see her in her own house only once or twice a month, but almost weekly, and as often as he had some item of news to give her in relation to Fabrice's affairs, the lady, accompanied by her maid Chekina, would come late in the evening and spend a few minutes with the Count in his garden. She was sharp enough even to deceive her coachman, who was devoted to her and believed she was visiting friends in the vicinity.

It is hardly necessary to say that the Count, immediately on receipt of the Fiscal's momentous confidence, gave the Duchess the signal that had been prearranged between

Digitized by Google

them. Although it was late at night, she sent word to him by Chekina to come to her at once. Mosca flew to obey her summons with the ardor of a young lover; however, he hesitated to tell her all, fearing the shock would be too much for her reason.

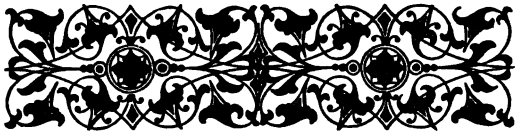
Finally, after beating about the bush for some time, he broke the dreadful news; it was beyond his strength to keep a secret when she asked him for it. Stress of suffering during the past nine months had wrought a great change in that ardent, impulsive soul; contrary to his expectations, the Duchess did not give way to tears or lamentations.

The next night she directed that Fabrice should be given the danger-signal: "*The castle is on fire.*"

He made the proper answer: "*Are my books burned?*"

The same night she succeeded in transmitting to him a letter in a leaden ball. A week after these occurrences was celebrated the wedding of the Marquis Crescenzi's sister, when the Duchess was guilty of an imprudence of which we shall speak at the proper time and place.

Digitized by Google



XXI

ABOUT a year previous to the time of her troubles the Duchess had had a singular encounter. One day when she had the *luna*, as the saying is in that country, she had taken a sudden fancy late in the afternoon to visit her château of Sacca, situated beyond Colorno on a hill overlooking the Po. She found a wholesome pleasure in improving and beautifying the property. She loved the great forest that crowned the hill and almost brushed the walls of the château; one of her favorite occupations was laying out paths through it to points of interest.

"You are encouraging the brigands to carry you off, fair Duchess," the Prince said to her one day; "it is impossible that a forest where you are known to take your walks should remain long deserted." He cast a sly

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

glance at the Count, whose jealousy he liked to titillate.

"I have no fears, Your Highness," the Duchess ingenuously replied, "when walking in my wood. I never harmed any one; why should any one wish to harm me?" Her language seemed almost a defiance of the Liberals of the neighborhood, ill-conditioned and desperate fellows whose talk was not always of the mildest.

On the day we are speaking of the Duchess remembered the Prince's words when she noticed a poorly dressed man apparently dogging her footsteps at a distance. At a point where the path she was following bent sharply, causing their courses to converge, the fellow was so near her that she was alarmed. Her first impulse was to shriek for her gamekeeper, whom she had left in the flower-garden near the château, almost half a mile away. The intruder approached, and dropped to his knees in front of her. He was young and good-looking, but his attire was in a shocking condition—there were rents in it a foot long; but his eyes were bright with the fire of an ardent soul.

"I am under sentence of death. I am

Digitized by Google

Doctor Ferrante Palla, and I am starving—I and my five children."

The Duchess had noticed that he was terribly emaciated, but he had such fine eyes, expressive of such tender sensibility, that she could not believe him to be a criminal. "Pallagi," she thought, "should have given eyes like those to his picture of St. John in the Wilderness that has just been hung in the cathedral." The idea of St. John was suggested by his excessive leanness. The Duchess gave him three sequins that she had in her purse, excusing the smallness of her gift on the score of an account she had just paid her gardener. Ferrante thanked her effusively. "Alas!" he said, "I was once an inhabitant of cities, where I was in the habit of seeing charming women. Since I was sentenced to die for faithfully performing my duties as a citizen I have been a denizen of the woods, and I was following you, not to solicit alms or rob you of your money, but as a wild man fascinated by angelic beauty. It is long since I have seen a pair of beautiful white hands."

"Rise, please," said the Duchess, for he remained kneeling.

"Let me be as I am," replied Ferrante;

Digitized by Google

"this position proves to me that I am not robbing at the present moment, and gives me peace of mind; for you must know that I live by robbery now that I am no longer allowed to exercise my profession. But I am not a footpad now; only a simple mortal doing homage to ideal loveliness." The Duchess saw that he was a little out of his mind, but was not frightened; she saw by the man's eyes that he was of a kindly disposition, and, moreover, odd and unusual characters had an attraction for her.

"As I was saying, I am a doctor, and I loved the wife of the apothecary at Parma, Sarasino; he found us out and drove her from his house, together with three children whom he suspected with too good reason of being mine, not his. I have had two more by her since then. The mother and five young ones are living in abject poverty in an apology for a house that I built for them with my own hands, in the woods, a league from here. For I have to be constantly on the watch to elude the gendarmes, and the poor woman will not leave me. I was condemned to death, and justly, for I was a conspirator. The Prince is a tyrant; I detest his very name. I did not fly the country,

Digitized by Google

because I had not the money. I have had troubles and trials without end; I ought long ago to have ended my wretched days. I have ceased to love the unhappy woman who bore me five children, and has ruined herself here and hereafter for my sake; I love another. But should I kill myself, mother and children will literally starve." The man spoke in accents of sincerity.

"But how do you manage to exist?" asked the Duchess, painfully affected by his tale.

"The mother spins; the oldest daughter is a servant and tends the sheep of a Liberal farmer; I pursue my calling on the highway between Piacenza and Genoa."

"How do you square that with your political opinions?"

"I make a note of the people I rob, and if I ever have any property I shall make restitution of the sums taken. I consider that a tribune of the people, such as I am, is performing services which, owing to their dangerous character, are not overpaid at a hundred francs a month, and I abstain from taking over twelve hundred francs a year.

"Oh, I forgot—I do steal a little more than that; the excess goes to pay for the printing of my works."

Digitized by Google

"What works?"

He mentioned the name of a volume of popular verse.

"What, signor," said the Duchess, in surprise, "are you Ferrante Palla, one of the most famous poets of the age?"

"Famous, maybe; I don't know; most unhappy, that I can vouch for."

"And a man of your talent, signor, reduced to robbing on the highway for a living!"

"That is perhaps why I am accorded a little talent. Up to the present time all our authors of any note have been in the pay of the government or of the cult they hated and would have overturned. I, in the first place, risk my life; then—O madame, think of the reflections that must distract my mind when I go out to rob! Am I pursuing the right course? I ask myself. Are the services rendered by the tribune of the people really worth a hundred francs a month? I have two shirts, the coat you see on my back, a worthless gun, and I am certain to finish on the gallows; I believe that I am not actuated by motives of self-interest. I should be happy but for that fatal love, which is a torture and a curse to me when with the mother of my children. My poverty drags

Digitized by Google

me down like a loathsome burden; I love fine clothes, white hands—"

He looked at the Duchess's hands in such a way that she was terrified again.

"Farewell, signor," she said to him. "Can I do anything to serve you in Parma?"

"Reflect now and then on this question: His task is to awaken the hearts of men and keep them from slumbering in the false material security of monarchical government: are the services he renders his fellow-citizens worth a hundred francs a month?—My misfortune is to love," he said in a low, soft voice, "and for nearly two years now you have been the sole occupant of my thoughts; but until to-day I have never seen you without alarming you." And he took to his heels and fled with a swiftness which astonished and greatly reassured the Duchess. "The gendarmes will have trouble in catching him," she thought. "He is mad, there 's not a doubt of it."

"He is mad, for certain," her servants said to her. "We have all known this long time of the poor man's passion for madame. When madame is here he can be seen roaming about the high ground of the forest, and as soon as madame has departed he never

Digitized by Google

fails to come and sit in the spots she occupied; he picks up the flowers that may have fallen from her bouquet and decks his shabby hat with them."

"And you never told me of these follies," said the Duchess, in a tone almost of reproach.

"We were afraid madame would speak of it to the Minister Mosca. He is such a good fellow, poor Ferrante! he would n't harm a fly; and because he loved our Napoleon they sentenced him to death."

She said not a word to the Minister of this encounter, and as it was the first secret she had kept from him in four long years she was obliged a dozen times to pull herself up short in the middle of a sentence. She returned to Sacca with money, but Ferrante kept aloof. She came back again two weeks later. Ferrante, after following her for a time, leaping and prancing through the wood at a distance of a hundred paces, suddenly burst on her with the rapidity of a swooping hawk and threw himself at her feet exactly as he had done on the previous occasion.

"Where were you when I was here two weeks ago?"

"Among the mountains, over beyond Novi,

Digitized by Google

whither I went to relieve some muleteers returning from Milan of the money they had received for their oil."

"Accept this from me."

Ferrante opened the purse she tendered him, and after extracting a sequin, which he kissed religiously and placed in his bosom, handed it back to her.

"You return the purse, and you a robber!"

"Undoubtedly. I have recorded a vow never to possess more than one hundred francs; as it is, the mother of my children at this moment has eighty francs and I have twenty-five, so that I am five francs out of the way. If they were to catch and hang me now I should suffer remorse. I took this sequin because it came from you and I love you."

The tone in which he spoke these few words was impressive in its simplicity. "He really loves," said the Duchess to herself.

His air that day was more than usually wild. He said there were persons in Parma who owed him six hundred francs, and that sum would enable him to repair his hovel, where his poor little children were always suffering from colds.

Digitized by Google

"But I will advance you six hundred francs," said the compassionate Duchess.

"But you must remember that I am a public man; will not my enemies calumniate me and say I have sold myself?"

The Duchess offered him shelter and concealment in Parma if he would promise to abdicate his magistracy temporarily and, above all, refrain from executing any of the death-sentences he said he had decreed *in petto.*

"And if I am hanged as a consequence of my imprudence," Ferrante gravely said, "all those thieves, murderers, and enemies of the people will live for years and die peaceably in their beds, and whose will the fault be? What will my Heavenly Father say when I appear before Him?"

The Duchess spoke to him at length of his children and the fatal consequences that might ensue from the dampness of his cabin; he finally concluded to accept her offer of shelter in Parma.

The Duke Sanseverina, on the single occasion of his spending a few hours in Parma after he was married, had shown his wife a remarkable crypt that existed near the southern angle of the palace that bore his name.

Digitized by Google

The front wall, which dated back to the Middle Ages, was eight feet thick; its interior had been hollowed out, forming a secret chamber twenty feet in height, but only two wide. Close beside it was that famous reservoir which is mentioned in all the books of travel as one of the great works of the twelfth century. Built by the Emperor Sigismund at the time of the siege of Parma, it was subsequently included in the enceinte of the Sanseverina palace.

Entrance was had to the crypt by pushing aside a huge block of stone which revolved on an axis. Ferrante's unfortunate condition and his children's miserable plight so affected the Duchess that she allowed him to make use of this retreat for a time. She saw him again a month later in the wood of Sacca, and as he was a little more rational on that occasion he recited one of his sonnets, which appeared to her equal or superior to anything that had been produced in Italy during the last two centuries. Ferrante was accorded several interviews; but his passion became demonstrative and importunate, and the Duchess saw he was no more to be depended on than other lovers whose pretensions are not nipped promptly in the bud.

Digitized by Google

She dismissed him to his woods and forbade him to speak to her again; he obeyed on the instant and with perfect docility. Matters were in this condition when Fabrice was arrested. Three days afterward, just as it was becoming dark, a Capuchin friar presented himself at the door of the Sanseverina palace and intimated that he had a secret of importance to communicate to the lady of the house. She was so wretched that she ordered him to be admitted. It was Ferrante. "A fresh iniquity is being perpetrated here," said the ardent wooer, "of which it is fitting the tribune of the people should take official cognizance. In my private capacity, on the other hand, all I have to offer Madame the Duchess Sanseverina is my life, and I place it at her feet."

So sincere a devotion on the part of a robber and a madman touched the Duchess's sensibilities. She had a long conversation with the man who had the name of being the greatest poet of northern Italy, and her tears flowed abundantly. "There is a man who can read my heart," she said to herself. The next day, likewise at the time of *Ave Maria*, he appeared again, this time disguised as a servant in livery.

Digitized by Google

"I am still in Parma. I have heard of horrors that my tongue refuses to repeat; but here I am. Reflect, madame, before rejecting my assistance! He whom you see at your feet is not one of the puppets of the court; he is a man!" He was on his knees as he spoke these words with an air that commanded attention. He added: "Yesterday I said to myself, 'She wept in my presence, therefore she is a little less unhappy.'"

"But consider the dangers that surround you in this city, signor; you will be arrested!"

"The tribune will say to you, 'Madame, what is life when duty calls?' The miserable man who in his fatal passion has seen his love of virtue perish will add, 'Madame, Fabrice, a man of noble heart, is perhaps about to die; do not reject the aid offered by another noble heart!' Here is a frame of iron and a soul whose only fear on earth is to displease you."

"If you speak further of your sentiments my door will be closed against you forever."

The Duchess had some thought that evening of telling Ferrante that she would allow his children a small pension, but she feared that he would go from her and kill himself.

Her mind was teeming with presentiments

Digitized by Google

of evil. "I too can die," she said to herself as the door closed on the robber-poet; "would to God that death might come to me, and quickly! If I could but find a man worthy of the name to watch over the welfare of my poor Fabrice!"

A sudden idea struck the Duchess. She took a sheet of paper, and, in a document that she interlarded with what scraps of legal phraseology she was master of, acknowledged to have received from the Sieur Ferrante Palla the sum of twenty-five thousand francs, in consideration of which she bound herself to pay to Mme. Sarasino and her five children an annuity of fifteen hundred francs. She added: "And I confer an additional yearly sum of three hundred francs on each of the children, upon the condition that Ferrante Palla shall give medical advice and assistance to my nephew, Fabrice del Dongo, and stand to him in the relation of a brother. I entreat that he will comply with my wishes in this matter." She signed the paper, antedating it by a year, and locked it away in her desk.

Two days later Ferrante presented himself again. It was at the time when the city was excited over the report of Fabrice's approach-

Digitized by Google

ing execution. Would the grisly spectacle be given in the citadel or under the trees of the public promenade? Many of the populace prolonged their evening stroll that day as far as the gate of the citadel to see what preparations were being made. Ferrante was affected by the spectacle. He found the Duchess in tears and incapable of speaking; she saluted with her hand and motioned him to a seat. Ferrante, disguised as a Capuchin, was superb; instead of taking the proffered chair he sank to his knees and prayed devoutly in a low voice. Presently the Duchess appeared a little calmer; without changing his position he interrupted his prayer a moment to say, "He renews the offer of his life."

"Think well on what you say!" cried the Duchess, with that haggard expression of the eye which, after a fit of sobbing, tells that tenderness is giving way to a fiercer emotion.

"He offers his life to avert Fabrice's fate, or to avenge him."

"There are conditions under which I might accept the sacrifice you propose," replied the Duchess.

She scrutinized him closely. His eyes lighted up joyously; he rose quickly and

Digitized by Google

raised his arms toward heaven. The Duchess went to her desk and took from a secret drawer a folded paper. "Read it," she said, handing it to him. It was the provision for Ferrante's children of which we have spoken.

His tears and sobs would not allow him to finish his reading; he fell on his knees.

"Give me back the paper," said the Duchess, and she burned it in the candle before his eyes. "My name must not appear if you are taken and executed," she added; "for you know the fate that is in store for you if you are caught."

"It will be sweet to die while smiting the tyrant; a still sweeter joy will be to die for your sake. With that laid down and clearly understood, please say nothing more of money matters; I should consider you doubted my disinterestedness."

"If you are compromised I too may be," replied the Duchess, "and after me Fabrice. It is for that reason, and not because I doubt your courage, that I exact that the man who has done me such a wrong shall die by poison and not by steel. For the same reason, so important to myself, I command you to use every possible effort to escape."

"Your orders shall be executed faithfully,

Digitized by Google

prudently, and to the letter, madame. It is a double retribution I am called on to inflict, yours and mine; but were it otherwise, I would obey, as I said, faithfully, prudently, and to the letter. I may fail, but I shall employ every human effort to succeed."

"It is Fabrice's murderer on whom I would see justice done."

"I had supposed so. During the twenty-seven months that I have been leading this Ishmaelitish, accursed life, I have often thought of such an action on my own behalf."

"If I am arrested and convicted as an accomplice," pursued the Duchess, in an imperious tone, "I do not wish it to be imputed to me that I seduced you. It is my command that you do not attempt to see me again before the blow is struck. He is not to be slain before I shall have given you the word. His death at the present juncture, far from being of use to me, would be a detriment. It is probable that the time of his taking off will not come for some months, but it will come. I insist that he shall die by poison, and I would prefer that he should live rather than that he should perish by dagger or pistol. For reasons that I do not care to explain, I

Digitized by Google

exact that you make every effort to save your life."

Ferrante was enchanted with the authoritative tone that the Duchess took toward him. As has been said, he was frightfully thin, but it was plain that he had been a handsome man in his time, and he believed that he was still what he had been once. "Am I mad," he said to himself, "or is it the Duchess's intention, some day when I shall have given her this proof of my devotion, to make me the happiest of men? And after all, why should she not? Am I not as good a man as that coxcomb Mosca, who can do nothing for her at a pinch—not even manage the escape of Monsignor Fabrice!"

"When the ax will fall is uncertain—perhaps to-morrow," the Duchess continued, in the same imperious tone. "You know the great reservoir situated at the southern angle of the palace, close to the secret chamber you occupied for a time. There is a way, known only to a few, by which the water may be let off into the street. Well, that shall be the signal of my vengeance. If you are living in Parma you will see, if you are inhabiting the woods you will hear, that the great reservoir of the Sanseverina palace has burst.

Digitized by Google

Then you are to act immediately, but by poison only, remember, and are to take as little risk as possible. Above all, no one is to know that I am implicated in the affair."

"Words are of no avail," Ferrante replied, with ill-concealed delight; "my mind is already made up as to the means I shall employ. Now that I cannot hope to see you as long as that man lives, the thought of him is more odious to me than it was before. I shall await impatiently your signal." He bowed brusquely and went his way. The Duchess watched his receding form.

She recalled him before he had left the antechamber.

"Ferrante!" she cried; "glorious man!"

He returned, as if impatient of being detained; his appearance at that moment was superb.

"And your children—what of them?"

"Madame, they will be richer than I; in your goodness you will give them some little aid."

"Here," she said, handing him a large casket made of olive-wood; "this contains the last of my diamonds—take them. They should sell for fifty thousand francs."

"Ah, madame, you humiliate me," said

Digitized by Google

Ferrante, with a gesture of repuguance, the expression of his face changing entirely.

"I shall not see you again before the deed is done—take it, it is my wish," replied the Duchess, with an air of hauteur that silenced her companion. He took the case, put it in his pocket, and left the room.

He had closed the door behind him. The Duchess again recalled him; he came back with a troubled air. The Duchess was standing in the middle of the apartment; she threw herself into his arms. After a moment's time Ferrante was ready to faint with happiness. The Duchess freed herself from his embrace and with her eyes motioned to the door.

"That is the only man that ever understood me," she mused. "Fabrice would have acted thus had he been here."

There were two noticeable traits in the Duchess's character: what she willed once she willed for all time; she never deliberated anew on a matter she had once disposed of. On this point she was accustomed to quote a saying of her first husband, the gallant General Pietranera: "The impudence of the fellow!" he said; "why should I suppose I have more sense to-day than when I formed that resolution?"

Digitized by Google

From this moment the Duchess began to appear somewhat more cheerful. Before the fatal resolution, wherever she went, whatever she saw or heard, the sensation of her inferiority to the Prince was always present to her mind—the sensation of her weakness and impotency. The Prince had basely deceived her, and Count Mosca, obeying his servile courtier's instinct, though innocent of evil intention, had seconded his master. As soon as the vengeance was determined on she felt her powers return to her; each movement of her intelligence gave her pleasure. I am inclined to think that the imagination is largely responsible for the immoral pleasure the Italians take in revenging their wrongs. People of other countries do not forgive, properly speaking; they forget.

The Duchess saw nothing more of Palla until along toward the close of Fabrice's captivity. As the reader has probably divined, it was he who suggested the idea of an escape. In the forest, two leagues from Sacca, was an old, half-ruined tower, more than a hundred feet in height. Before mentioning the projected flight a second time to the Duchess, Ferrante besought her to send Ludovic with a crew of trustworthy men to erect ladders

Digitized by Google

reaching to the summit of this tower. In the Duchess's presence he ascended by the ladders and made the descent by means of a simple knotted rope. He repeated the experience three times, then again explained his idea. A week afterward Ludovic also safely effected the descent; it was then that the Duchess communicated the invention to Fabrice.

During the days immediately preceding the attempt, which might result in the death of the prisoner in more ways than one, the Duchess knew not a moment's tranquillity save when Ferrante was at her side; the man's courage seemed to electrify her own. But she could not divulge to the Count her new and strange intimacy. His objections would have distressed her and added to her anxieties. What, allow herself to be guided by the counsels of an admitted lunatic, a man under sentence of death! Ferrante was in the Duchess's salon when the Count came to acquaint her with what had passed between the Prince and Rassi; and after Mosca had taken his departure she had all she could do to prevent her new ally from proceeding at once to the execution of his horrible design.

"I see my way clear before me now!" ex-

Digitized by Google

claimed the madman. "I have no longer any doubts as to the justice of the action!"

"But Fabrice will be murdered in the moment of reaction that will inevitably follow!"

"In that case he would be spared the peril of the escape. It is possible, and even easy," he added, "but the young man lacks experience."

The wedding of the Marquis Crescenzi's sister came off in due course, and at the ensuing reception the Duchess met Clelia and was enabled to converse with her without arousing the suspicions of the observant guests. It was in the garden, whither the two ladies had retired for a breath of fresh air, that the Duchess delivered the package of ropes to the young girl. These ropes, manufactured with the greatest care from silk and hemp in equal proportions, were thin and very flexible. Ludovic had made an exhaustive test of their strength, and found them capable of sustaining a weight of more than eight quintals. They had been compressed until they had the form and bulk of an octavo volume. Clelia took the package and promised the Duchess to do her utmost to see it safely delivered at the Farnèse Tower.

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

"But I fear you have not sufficient resolution; and besides," the Duchess politely added, "what interest can you have in a total stranger?"

"Monsignor del Dongo is unfortunate, and I pledge myself to save him!"

But the Duchess, not relying overmuch on the resources of a young girl of twenty, had taken other precautions that she had no intention of disclosing to the daughter of the Governor. That functionary, as may be supposed, was present at the wedding festivities. The Duchess had reasoned that if she could manage to give him a narcotic the effects of the dose would be attributed to apoplexy, and that then, with a little address, his attendants might be prevailed on, instead of employing the carriage to take him home to the citadel, to make use of a litter which was to be discovered by chance in the house where the fête was given. Intelligent men, dressed as mechanics employed for the occasion of the entertainment, were also to be on hand, who, in the prevailing confusion, would obligingly offer their services to transport the sufferer to his palace. These men, subject to Ludovic's orders, had a quantity of ropes about their persons, adroitly concealed beneath their

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

clothing. It will be remarked that the Duchess had become somewhat flighty since she had taken Fabrice's escape under serious consideration. The peril that adored being was in had been too much for her understanding, especially in these later days when it had been so long protracted. Through excess of precaution she was near causing her plans to miscarry, as will be seen presently. Everything passed off as she had planned, with the single exception that the narcotic was too powerful. Every one believed—even the medical gentlemen—that the General had an attack of apoplexy.

Clelia, fortunately, in her anxiety and distress, had no suspicion of the Duchess's criminal attempt. The confusion was such when the litter containing the unconscious and apparently moribund General reached the gate of the citadel that Ludovic and his men passed in unquestioned; their persons were searched at the Bridge of the Slave, but only perfunctorily. When they had placed the General in his bed they were conducted to the kitchen, where the servants regaled them with a collation; but at the termination of the repast, which lasted almost until daylight, they were informed that in accordance

Digitized by Google

with the regulations of the prison they would have to submit to be locked up for the remainder of the night; the Governor's lieutenant would release them early in the morning.

The men had found an opportunity of delivering to Ludovic the ropes they had about them; but Ludovic had considerable difficulty in attracting Clelia's attention. At last, as she was passing from one room to another, he showed her where he had deposited the packages in a dark corner of one of the first-floor apartments. She was struck by the strangeness of the proceeding; the darkest suspicions rose immediately to her mind.

"Who are you?" she said to Ludovic.

And she added, on receiving an evasive answer:

"I ought to have you arrested; you or those connected with you have poisoned my father! Confess the nature of the poison you employed, so that the prison doctor may know what antidotes to give. Confess this instant, or you and your accomplices shall never leave this citadel alive."

"The signorina has no cause to be alarmed," Ludovic replied, with perfect ease and politeness; "no one harbored an intention of poisoning her father. Some one imprudently

Digitized by Google

recommended a dose of laudanum to ease the pain of the General's gout, and it seems the servant who stands charged with the crime poured out a few drops too many. We shall never cease to reproach ourselves, but the signorina may rest assured, thank Heaven, that there is not the slightest danger. His Excellency the Governor should be treated for having taken by mistake a too large dose of laudanum; but I have the honor to assure the signorina that the man who is charged with the crime did not employ a veritable poison, as did Barbone at the time when he attempted to murder Monsignor Fabrice. There was no idea of retaliation for the peril to which Monsignor Fabrice was subjected. All that was in the phial intrusted to the stupid lackey was laudanum; to the truth of that I am willing to make oath. But it is to be understood that in case I should be examined before a court of justice I would deny everything.

"Besides, if the signorina should speak of laudanum and poison to any one, no matter whom—even the excellent Don Cesare himself—it will be the same as if she slew Fabrice with her own hand. She will be destroying hopelessly all prospects of escape,

Digitized by Google

and the signorina knows as well as I do that it is not laudanum that will be used to poison Monsignor. She knows, too, that only a month's delay has been granted for the perpetration of the crime, and that more than a week has already elapsed since the receipt of the fatal order. So, if she causes my arrest, or if she breathes one word, whether to Don Cesare or to another, she will be thwarting all our plans, and, as I said, will have Fabrice's death upon her conscience."

Clelia was frightened by Ludovic's strange calmness.

"So," she said to herself, "here I am engaged in conversation with my father's would-be murderer! And it is love that has made me a participant in all these horrors!"

She could scarcely articulate for her remorse. She said to Ludovic:

"I shall leave you locked in this salon while I go to tell the physician that it is only the effects of laudanum he has to guard against —but, great heavens! how shall I tell him it was *I* who learned that fact?—then I will return to set you free. But tell me," said Clelia, returning suddenly from the door, "did Fabrice know anything of the use of laudanum?"

Digitized by Google

"No, signorina, and he would never have given his consent to it. And then we are acting within the limits of the strictest caution; our object is to save Monsignor, who is doomed to die a horrible death within three weeks from now. The order emanates from one whose will no one dares oppose, and, to be perfectly frank with the signorina, it is said that the execution of the crime has been intrusted to the terrible Fiscal Rassi."

Clelia hastened away, chilled with terror. She felt she could rely sufficiently on Don Cesare's discretion to tell him, with certain reservations, the main fact that she had learned from Ludovic. The good priest, without question or reply, hurried off at once to inform the doctor.

Clelia returned to the salon where she had left Ludovic imprisoned with the intention of questioning him further. She did not find him there; he had managed to make his escape. On the center-table was a purse of sequins and a small box containing poisons of different sorts. She shuddered at sight of the drugs. "How am I to know," she thought, "that my father was given nothing worse than laudanum, and that it was not

Digitized by Google

the Duchess's intention to be avenged for Barbone's attempt?

"Good God!" she exclaimed, "I have been conversing with my father's murderers! And I allowed them to escape! And perhaps that man, if subjected to examination, would have confessed to something more than laudanum!"

She kneeled and put up a fervent prayer to the Madonna, weeping abundantly the while.

In the meantime the prison doctor, greatly surprised to learn from Don Cesare that he had nothing more serious than laudanum to deal with, applied the proper remedies, under whose action the more alarming symptoms quickly disappeared. It was about daybreak when the General's faculties began slowly to return to him. His first action indicating renewed consciousness was to soundly berate the colonel his second in command, who had ventured to give some unimportant but necessary orders during the chief's disability. After that he stormed for a long while at a kitchen-wench, who was so ill-advised as to mention apoplexy while giving him his bouillon.

"Am I so old, I should like to know," he roared, "as to be a subject for apoplexy? I

Digitized by Google

wonder who the confounded idiots are that circulate such reports; they can be no friends of mine. And besides, would n't the doctor have bled me if it had been apoplexy? Then what 's the use going about spreading such infernal lies and calumnies?"

Fabrice, busily occupied with his preparations for flight, was unable to account for the unwonted commotion that filled the citadel on the bringing home of the unfortunate General. His first idea was that there had been a modification of his sentence and the executioners were coming for him. Then, as no one came to trouble the quiet of his chamber, he thought that Clelia had been betrayed, and that the ropes which she was doubtless bringing in had been taken from her, rendering his projected flight impracticable. In the morning, at earliest peep of dawn, a man, an entire stranger to him, entered the cell and placed upon the table a basket of fruit in which was concealed a letter couched in these terms:

"Filled with bitterest remorse for what has lately happened, not, thank Heaven, through consent or procurement of mine, but owing to a suggestion let fall by me, I have made a vow to the Blessed Virgin that if, through

Digitized by Google

her dear intercession, my father's life is spared, I will never disregard his wishes. I will marry the Marquis Crescenzi whenever he requires it of me, and will never look on you again. Still I consider it my duty to carry out what has been begun. Next Sunday, on your return from church, whither you will be taken at my request (I would have you prepared to face death; you know not what may be the result of your dangerous enterprise)—on your return from mass, I say, delay as long as possible returning to your cell. You will find there what is requisite for the projected undertaking. If you perish I shall be heartbroken. Shall I have been accessory to your death? Has not the Duchess told me repeatedly that the Raversi faction is gaining the upper hand? Their object is to commit the Prince by a deed of cruelty which will make it impossible for Count Mosca to serve him longer. The Duchess declared to me, with tears streaming down her cheeks, that this is your sole resource; your only choice is between this attempt and death. I cannot look on you again; the vow I have taken will not permit me; but if on Sunday next, toward evening, you see me at the accustomed window dressed

Digitized by Google

all in black, it will be the signal that all is in readiness so far as my slender resources permit. About midnight or one o'clock a light will be shown from the window; that will signify that the decisive moment is at hand. Commend yourself to your patron saint, don the priestly garments with which you will be furnished, and go forth to your fate.

"Adieu, Fabrice. I shall be on my knees in prayer, believe me, and shedding scalding tears throughout your time of peril. If you perish I shall not survive you long—good heavens! what am I saying?—but if you are successful I shall never see you more. On Sunday, after mass, you will find in your cell money, poisons, and ropes, provided by that terrible woman who loves you so passionately and has told me again and again that there is no other course left you but this. Farewell. May God and the Madonna have you in their keeping!"

Fabio Conti was a suspicious and therefore a cruel jailer; his dreams were all of escaping convicts, émeutes, plots, and conspiracies; and the severities resulting from his jealous disposition made him detested by every one in the citadel. But human nature is very much the same in every station, and

Digitized by Google

the prisoners—even those wretched creatures who were chained down like beasts in dungeons three feet wide and high by eight in length, where they could neither sit nor stand—contributed their pence to defray the expense of a Te Deum when they learned that their taskmaster was out of danger. Two or three of the unfortunates composed poetical addresses in honor of General Conti. To what depths of servility may not men be reduced by misery and starvation! But let him who is inclined to blame them try the experiment of living for a year in a cell three feet high, with a diet of eight ounces of bread a day and a strict fast on Fridays!

Clelia, who had remained at her father's bedside save when she from time to time went to the chapel to put up a prayer, reported that it was the Governor's order that the rejoicings should not take place until Sunday. On the morning of that day Fabrice attended mass and heard the Te Deum; in the evening there was a display of fireworks, wine flowed without stint in the basement of the château, and some unknown friend had sent in several small casks of brandy, which were quickly staved by the thirsty soldiers. In their good feeling the men could not per-

Digitized by Google

mit their five comrades who were on sentry around the palace to suffer from thirst; as they approached their boxes on their beat some compassionate soul served them with wine, and it was never ascertained whose was the hand that supplied each man who went on duty after midnight with a glass of brandy, the bottle (as was proven subsequently at the court-martial) being in every instance set down beside the sentry-box and forgotten there.

The disorder lasted longer than Clelia had supposed it would, and it was not until about one o'clock that Fabrice, who in the last few days had succeeded in sawing through two of the iron bars at his window, commenced to remove the shutter. His work was carried on directly over the sentinels' heads, but they heard nothing. He had made some additional knots in the rope by means of which he was to make the terrible descent of the great tower, one hundred and eighty feet. He had coiled this rope about his body, to which, owing to the knots, it could not be adjusted closely; it formed a protuberance over eighteen inches high and was a serious impediment to his freedom of movement.

These details attended to as well as circum-

Digitized by Google

stances allowed, Fabrice took the shorter rope by which he was to descend the distance of thirty-five feet that lay between his window and the esplanade on which the Governor's palace was situated. By this time the sentries were hopelessly fuddled; but as it would not answer to alight directly on their heads, the window Fabrice had selected for his departure was not that which commanded a view of Clelia's aviary, but another, across the room, which opened on the roof of an old soldiers' barrack. By a sick man's caprice, the first thing General Conti did on regaining his power of speech was to order two hundred men into this long-disused building. He declared that after trying to poison him his enemies' next attempt would be to murder him in his bed, and those two hundred soldiers were to protect him. The effect that this unexpected measure produced on Clelia may be imagined. The pious girl was painfully conscious of the extent to which she was betraying her father, a father, too, who had narrowly escaped poisoning in the interest of the prisoner whom she loved. The movement of the troops seemed to her almost like a special decree of Providence, forbidding her to proceed further

Digitized by Google

with her design of giving Fabrice his liberty.

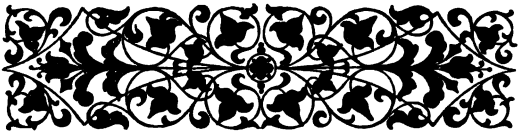
But in Parma every one was talking of the prisoner's impending fate. Even at the reception after Giulia Crescenzi's wedding this dismal topic had occupied a large share of the conversation. Since a man of Fabrice's birth, with the protection of the Prime Minister to boot, had been kept in prison for nine months for such a mere trifle as killing a play-actor, it was clear that politics were at the bottom of the matter. In that case, men said, there was no use bothering about him further; if the authorities did not see fit to execute him publicly, he would be carried off by illness. A locksmith who had been sent for to do some work in the prison spoke of Fabrice as one who had long since been put out of the way, and whose death had been kept quiet for political reasons. The man's story decided Clelia.

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



XXII

DURING the day Fabrice had been troubled by many serious and disagreeable reflections; but as the hours struck one by one, bringing him nearer to the moment of action, he felt himself becoming more cheerful and confident. The Duchess had warned him that he must beware of the effects of the fresh air after his long confinement; that at first he would find difficulty in walking; that in such case it would be better to submit to recapture rather than rashly attempt the descent of a wall a hundred and eighty feet high. "In that event," said Fabrice, "I will lie down under the parapet, take an hour's sleep, and try it over again. Clelia has my promise, and, moreover, I would rather throw myself from the top of the highest rampart in the world than be continually thinking of

Digitized by Google

the taste of the bread I eat. What a horrible death it must be, poison! Fabio Conti won't stand on ceremony; he 'll just give me a dose of the arsenic with which he kills the rats of his citadel."

About midnight one of those dense white fogs that are frequent in the valley of the Po came rolling in upon the city, and presently mounted and enfolded the esplanade and bastions from amid which rises the great tower of the citadel. Fabrice could no longer make out the acacias that fenced the soldiers' little gardens at the foot of the wall, a hundred and eighty feet below. "That serves my purpose excellently," he thought.

Soon after it had struck half-past twelve Clelia exhibited her signal from the window of the aviary. Fabrice was ready; he crossed himself devoutly, then attached to his bedstead the short rope by whose assistance he was to lower himself to the platform on which the palace stood. He landed safely on the roof of the barrack into which had been thrown the day before the garrison of two hundred men of which we told. It then lacked a quarter to one, and unfortunately the soldiers were not asleep. While he was stealing with cat-like tread over the great

Digitized by Google

hollow tiles, Fabrice heard them saying that the devil was walking on their roof and they must try to shoot him. Some voices protested against the action as impious; others declared that if they fired and killed nothing the Governor would consign them all to prison for needlessly alarming the garrison. The result of the discussion was that Fabrice hastened his speed and in clattering over the roof made much more noise. It is a fact that as, dangling from his rope, he passed before the windows—from which, owing to the projecting eaves, he was luckily four or five feet distant—the openings were bristling with bayonets. Some have said that it was with Fabrice, daredevil as he was, that the idea originated of playing the devil's rôle, and that he threw a handful of sequins to the soldiers. What is quite certain, however, is that he had strewn the floor of his chamber with sequins, and proceeded to scatter more on the pavement of the esplanade along his course from the Farnèse Tower to the parapet, with the idea of distracting the attention of his pursuers and gaining time.

On reaching the platform, where on every side were sentries whose vigilance on ordinary occasions he would have found it

Digitized by Google

difficult to elude, he directed his steps toward the western parapet and proceeded to look for the new stone mentioned by the Duchess in her instructions.

It appears incredible, and, but for the fact that a whole city was witness to the circumstance, might seriously impair the historian's reputation for accuracy, that none of the sentries stationed along the parapet challenged the fugitive; but the truth is, the fog we spoke of was rising, and Fabrice has since said that when he was on the platform it seemed to him to extend half-way up the Farnèse Tower. But the fog was not thick, and he had no difficulty in making out the sentinels, some of whom were pacing their beat. He added that, as if under the direction of some supernatural agency, he went and fearlessly took his position between two sentries who were quite near each other. He tranquilly uncoiled the rope from around his body; twice it became tangled, and it was with no little trouble that he finally managed to lay it out straight upon the parapet. He could hear the voices of the soldiers conversing around him on every side, and was firmly resolved to poniard the first one who came toward him. "I was not the least bit

Digitized by Google

nervous," he added; "it did not seem to me that I was doing anything out of the usual course."

When he had at last straightened out his rope he made it fast to a gutter that served to carry off the rain-water, mounted the parapet and put up a brief but fervent prayer, and finally, like a hero of the days of chivalry, devoted a moment's thought to Clelia. "How changed I am," he said to himself, "from that fickle and libertine Fabrice who entered here nine months ago!" At last he applied himself to the perilous descent. All was done with mechanical precision, he told afterward, as if it had been broad daylight and a score of friends were watching him trying to win a bet. When about half-way down he felt the strength of his arms deserting him; he even let go the rope for an instant, he believes, but speedily recovered it. He probably caught on the brambles, he says, which checked his downward motion and tore his flesh mercilessly. From time to time he was assailed by a terrific pain between the shoulders which almost deprived him of the power to breathe. There was a vibratory motion that troubled him excessively; he would swing out into space only to

Digitized by Google

be crowded back again upon the rank vegetation. He was struck by the wings of great birds that he awakened and that came blundering up against him as they flew stupidly away. The first time this occurred he thought he was attacked by men who had followed him down the rope in pursuit, and made ready to defend himself. At last he reached the bottom of the great tower, safe and sound save for two badly lacerated hands. He states that when his task was half accomplished the descent was made much easier to him by the outward slope of the wall; the plants, too, which grew in the crevices between the stones gave him something to hold on by. When his aërial journey came to an end, in one of the soldiers' gardens, he landed in the top of an acacia which, viewed from above, had appeared to him four or five feet high, but was in reality fifteen or twenty. A man who was lying on the ground hard by sleeping off his potations took him for a robber. His tumble from the tree nearly cost him a dislocated shoulder. He started for the rampart, but, as he tells the story, his legs felt as if they were made of cotton-wool; his strength was entirely gone. Notwithstanding the danger there

Digitized by Google

was in it, he sat down and took a swallow of brandy from his flask. He dozed off for a few minutes, losing consciousness momentarily of time and place. When he awoke he could not understand how it was that, being in his chamber, trees should be growing round him. But the terrible truth was not long in returning to his memory. He rose and pushed forward to the rampart, which he ascended by a convenient flight of steps. The sentry on that post was snoring in his box. He found a fragment of a burst cannon among the grass and made it fast to the end of his third rope. The rope was too short, and he fell in a muddy ditch where there was a foot of water. As he was picking himself up and looking about him to see where he was, two men came out of the darkness and laid hold of him. His heart rose in his throat, but he was reassured on hearing a low voice murmur close to his ear, "Ah, Monsignor! Monsignor!" Something told him vaguely that the two men were servants of the Duchess, and he immediately fainted dead away. A little after he was conscious of being borne swiftly and silently in the arms of men; then a halt was made, which alarmed him greatly. But he had strength neither to speak nor to

Digitized by Google

open his eyes. He felt some one's arms around him; suddenly he recognized the Duchess's habitual perfume. The odor revived him; he opened his eyes, murmured faintly, "Ah, dear friend!" then relapsed into unconsciousness.

The faithful Bruno, with a band of gendarmes friendly to the Count, was in reserve at a short distance. The Count himself was concealed in a cottage hard by. He would not have hesitated, had there been occasion for it, to draw his sword, in company with some half-pay officers, old friends of his, whom he had with him. He considered himself under a moral obligation to save Fabrice, whose peril he regarded as most imminent, and who, but for his, Mosca's, stupid interference with the Duchess's plans, might have had a pardon authenticated by the Prince's signature.

The Duchess, surrounded by a little army of men armed to the teeth, had been waiting since midnight in profound silence before the walls of the citadel. She could not remain quiet for a moment; it was her belief that she should have to give battle to rescue Fabrice from his pursuers. Her vivid imagination had depicted a thousand dangers and

Digitized by Google

devised a thousand remedies, all equally visionary and imprudent, and too long to be narrated here. It has been said that more than eighty of her agents were on foot that night waiting to fight in her cause. Ludovic and Ferrante, fortunately, were at the head of the force, and the Minister of Police was not hostile.

The Duchess's wits deserted her entirely when she beheld Fabrice; she clasped him convulsively in her arms, then was horrified to see herself covered with blood. It came from the young man's hand; she thought him dangerously wounded. Assisted by one of her attendants, she was removing his coat to look for the hurt when Ludovic, who chanced to be close at hand, used his authority to place her and her nephew in one of the carriages that were in waiting in a garden near the city gate, and started them off at speed to pass the Po at Sacca. Ferrante, at the head of twenty stout, well-armed fellows, brought up the rear, and pledged himself there should be no pursuit. The Count, alone and on foot, remained in the neighborhood of the citadel until nearly three o'clock, when all was quiet. "This is high treason," he said to himself, with a sensation of delight.

Digitized by Google

Attached to the Duchess's household was a young surgeon between whom and Fabrice there was a remarkable resemblance in face and figure. Ludovic had the bright idea of turning this likeness to account. Bundling the young man into a carriage, he said to him:

"Let it be understood that you are flying to seek refuge in Bologna. Act like a person badly scared and who has lost his wits, and, while apparently endeavoring to avoid arrest, try to be arrested. When you are taken give confused and contradictory answers, and finally, at the last moment, acknowledge that you are Fabrice del Dongo. Use every method you can think of to gain time. Be cunning as a serpent and innocent as a dove; it won't cost you more than a month's imprisonment, and you will be richer by fifty sequins that madame will give you."

"Who thinks of money when one has it in his power to do madame a service?"

He set out immediately and was arrested a few hours later, greatly to the delight of General Conti and his friend Rassi, who was less confident of securing his baronial title now that Fabrice was out of danger.

The escape was not known in the citadel

Digitized by Google

until six o'clock, and it was not until ten that any one was found brave enough to inform the Prince. The Duchess was so well served that, notwithstanding she thrice stopped the carriage on account of Fabrice's profound slumber, which she took for a mortal swoon, she was set across the Po in a small boat just as the church clocks were striking four. Fresh horses were in waiting on the left bank. Two leagues more were covered at a rattling pace, after which there was a delay of more than an hour while their passports were being verified. The Duchess had an abundant supply of these necessary documents for herself and for Fabrice, but she was as one possessed that day; she could think of nothing better to do than give the Austrian chief of police ten napoleons and shake hands with him, bursting into tears meanwhile. The official, in his suspicion and alarm, began the examination over again. Post-horses were taken after that. The Duchess tipped the postboys so extravagantly that distrust was excited on every hand in that country where one has only to be a stranger to be suspected. Ludovic again came to her assistance; he said that madame was out of her mind with grief on account of the severe

Digitized by Google

illness of young Count Mosca, son of the Prime Minister of Parma, whom she was conducting to Pavia in order to have a consultation of physicians.

It was not until they had left the Po ten leagues behind them that the fugitive entirely recovered consciousness; he was suffering from a dislocated shoulder and innumerable cuts and bruises. The Duchess continued to behave in such extraordinary fashion that mine host of the inn in the village where they dined believed he must be entertaining a princess of imperial blood, and was about to see that she was accorded the honors due to her rank, when Ludovic told him that if he set the bells ringing the Princess would certainly clap him into prison for the remainder of his days.

At last they crossed the Piedmontese frontier, about six o'clock in the evening. There for the first time Fabrice could feel he was out of danger. He was driven to a quiet little village off the main road, his injuries were attended to, and he had a few hours more of sleep.

It was in this village that the Duchess did a thing that was not only scandalous in point of morality, but which was fatal to her tran-

Digitized by Google

quillity for the remainder of her life. One day, some weeks before Fabrice's escape, when all Parma had streamed out to the citadel to try to get a glimpse of the scaffold that, as rumor had it, was being erected in the courtyard for the young man's benefit, Mme. Sanseverina had shown to Ludovic, whom she had lately made her factotum, the secret spring by pressing which it was possible to displace one of the stones in the foundation of the great reservoir of the Sanseverina palace, a monument of the thirteenth century of which mention has been made elsewhere. While Fabrice was asleep in the trattoria of the little village the Duchess sent for Ludovic. He thought she must be losing her mind, so strange were the glances she cast at him.

"I suppose you were expecting I would give you a few thousand francs," she said to him. "Well, I shall do nothing of the kind. I know you; you are a poet; you would make ducks and drakes of the money. I intend to give you the little property of la Ricciarda, a league from Casal-Maggiore." Ludovic went down on his knees, out of his wits for joy, protesting earnestly that it was not from mercenary motives that he had helped to save

Digitized by Google

Monsignor Fabrice; that he had always loved him ever since the time when as madame's third coachman he had had the honor of driving him. When the worthy man, who really had much delicacy of feeling, thought he had sufficiently bothered such a great lady with himself and his affairs he would have departed, but she, with flashing eyes, said to him:

"Stay!"

She was pacing the little inn parlor without uttering a word, glancing from time to time at Ludovic with unfathomable eyes. At last the man, seeing that this strange promenade threatened to have no end, brought himself to speak to his mistress:

"Madame has made me such an unmerited gift, so far above the wildest dreams of a poor man like me, so much beyond any poor services that I may have had it in my power to render, that I feel I cannot conscientiously keep her farm of la Ricciarda. I have the honor to restore the property to madame, and beg that instead of it she will grant me a pension of four hundred francs."

"How often in your lifetime," she said, with somber dignity—"how often have you

Digitized by Google

heard of my abandoning a determination once I had proclaimed it to the world?"

This said, she continued her promenade some minutes longer; then, stopping suddenly, she cried:

"It is owing to chance, and because he found favor in the eyes of that little girl, that Fabrice's life was saved! He must have died had he not gained her love. Will you dare to tell me that is not the truth?" she said, advancing on Ludovic with eyes that glowed with smothered rage. He drew back a few paces, believing that this time there could be no doubt as to her insanity, and his pleasant dream of owning la Ricciarda vanished away in smoke.

"Well," continued the Duchess, in sweetest and most mellifluous accents, as different as day from darkness from her previous eager and angry utterance, "it is my desire that my good people of Sacca should have a day of rejoicing, one that they won't forget in a long, long time. I would like you to return to Sacca—have you any objection? Do you think there is danger?"

"None worth speaking of, madame; none of the people in Sacca will ever let on that I was in Monsignor Fabrice's service. And

Digitized by Google

besides, if madame will forgive me for saying it, I am itching to see my farm of la Ricciarda; it seems so droll to be a landowner!"

"I am glad to see you in such good spirits. I believe that the lessee of la Ricciarda is three or four years behind with his rent. I will remit the half of what he owes me, and the other half I give to you, but on this condition: you are to go to Sacca and give out that day after to-morrow will be the festival of one of my patron saints, and you will make arrangements to have my château splendidly illuminated on the evening after your arrival. I wish you to spare neither trouble nor expense; remember that this is the happiest moment of my life. I have had the illumination in mind and been preparing for it this long time; for the last three months I have been collecting in the cellars of my château material for the fête. I have bought and turned over to my gardener fireworks sufficient to make a magnificent display; I wish them to be let off on the terrace over the Po. I have eighty-nine hogsheads of wine in my cellars; arrange to have eighty-nine fountains of wine spouting in my park. If a single bottle remains undrunk next day I shall say you are not a friend of

Digitized by Google

Fabrice. When the fountains are spouting, the lights at their brightest, and the fireworks under full headway, you will quietly leave the scene; for it is possible, and it is my hope, that certain persons at Parma will look at the proceedings in the light of an affront."

"It is quite possible they will; nay, more, it is a certainty; as it is also certain that the Fiscal Rassi, who signed Monsignor's sentence, will be wild with rage. But if madame wishes to confer on her poor servant a gratification greater even than the gift of half the arrears of rent of la Ricciarda," Ludovic timidly added, "she will permit me to have a little quiet amusement at that Rassi's expense—"

"You are a man after my own heart!" cried the Duchess, rapturously; "but I can't allow you to do anything to Rassi at present; I mean to have him hanged before all the people some of these days. As for yourself, be cautious and don't let them arrest you at Sacca; all my pleasure would be spoiled if you should come to grief."

"Madame need have no fears on my account. Why, I have only to say that madame is celebrating the fête of her patron

Digitized by Google

saint. The authorities might send thirty mounted gendarmes to interfere; every man of them would be unhorsed before reaching the red cross in the center of the town. No, no, there 's no nonsense about the men of Sacca; old smugglers they are, and would lay down their lives for madame."

"Well," the Duchess negligently continued, "if I treat my good folks of Sacca to wine, it is my wish that the inhabitants of Parma should have a bath. On the night of the illumination take the best horse in my stable, ride at speed to my palace in the city, and open the reservoir."

"Ah, ah!" exclaimed Ludovic, laughing heartily, "that 's a capital idea of madame's —wine for the honest men of Sacca, water for the shopkeepers of Parma! The knaves, they were so sure that Monsignor Fabrice was to be poisoned just as poor L—— was!"

The ex-coachman's merriment seemed as if it would never end; the Duchess made no attempt to check his boisterous laughter; he repeated over and over again: "Wine for the men of Sacca, water for those of Parma! Madame is doubtless aware that when the reservoir was opened by accident, some twenty years ago, the water stood more

Digitized by Google

than a foot deep in many of the streets of the city."

"And water for those of Parma!" the Duchess laughingly replied. "If it had been determined that Fabrice should lose his head the mall before the citadel would not have held the people. Every one calls him the Great Defendant. But above all, be careful and be secret, that it may never leak out that the inundation was ordered by me or executed by you. No one must know of this mad prank—not even Fabrice, not even the Count himself. But I had almost forgotten the poor of Sacca. Go and write a letter to my man of business—I will sign it. Say that I desire him to distribute a hundred sequins among the poor people of Sacca on the occasion of my fête, and that he is to obey your instructions in all things relating to the illumination, the fireworks, and the wine, and that there is not to be a full bottle remaining in my cellars the next day."

"There is one respect in which madame's steward will have difficulty in complying with her orders: madame has been mistress of the château for five years, and in that time not a dozen paupers have been seen in Sacca."

"And water for the men of Parma!"

Digitized by Google

caroled the Duchess. "How do you propose to carry out the pleasantry?"

"I have got it all planned out. I shall start from Sacca at sharp nine o'clock; at half after ten my horse is in the stable of the Inn of the Three Jolly Beggars, on the road to Casal-Maggiore and my property of la Ricciarda; at eleven I am in my room at the palace, and at a quarter past I touch the spring and give the Parmesans water in abundance in which to drink the health of the Great Defendant. Ten minutes later I am out of the city and on the Bologna road. I take off my hat in passing to the citadel and its governor, so lately the victim of Monsignor's courage and madame's cleverness. I strike into a cross-road that I know of, and presto! I am at la Ricciarda."

Ludovic shot a glance at the Duchess; what he saw terrified him. She was staring with all her might at the blank wall a few feet in front of her, and, truth to tell, her expression was gruesome. "Ah, my poor farm!" thought Ludovic. "She 's mad, mad as a March hare—there 's no use attempting to deny it!" The Duchess looked at him and divined what was passing in his mind.

"So, Master Ludovic the poet, you want

Digitized by Google

my gift expressed in black and white. Go and fetch a sheet of paper." Ludovic did not require to be told this twice, and the Duchess with her own hand filled up a long instrument, antedated by a year, in which she acknowledged to have received from Ludovic San-Micheli the sum of eighty thousand francs, and to have transferred to him as security the la Ricciarda property. If at the expiration of twelve months the mortgagor should not have repaid the eighty thousand francs aforesaid, then la Ricciarda was to remain the property of the mortgagee.

"It is a handsome thing to do," said the Duchess to herself—"to give a faithful servant nearly the third of all I have left!"

"I can allow you only two days after your feat of the reservoir," she continued, addressing Ludovic, "in which to make merry and rejoice at Casal-Maggiore. By the way, in order that the transfer may stand in law, be careful always to speak of our transaction as dating back a year. I shall proceed to Belgirate. Come and join me there with as little delay as possible. Fabrice will likely go to England, and I shall want you to accompany him."

Digitized by Google

Betimes the next morning the Duchess and Fabrice were at Belgirate.

They took up their quarters in that charming village, but a great sorrow was in store for Mme. Sanseverina on the shore of beautiful Lake Maggiore. Fabrice had undergone a radical change. Almost immediately upon his waking from the semi-lethargic slumber that succeeded his escape, his aunt had perceived that something unusual was going on within him. The sentiment that he took such infinite pains to conceal was a strange one; it was nothing less than this: he was mourning his lost prison. He studiously refrained from owning the cause of his melancholy; questions would have followed which he would not have cared to answer.

"What!" exclaimed the Duchess, in amazement, "can you look back on those times without shuddering, when to keep life in you you were forced to eat of the vile dishes furnished by the prison kitchen, and each time you ate of them asked yourself, 'This dish has a strange taste; I wonder if it is poisoned?' —do not those memories inspire you with horror?"

"I used to think of death in the same way that I suppose soldiers think of it," Fabrice

Digitized by Google

replied—"as a contingency that might happen, but that I was to do my best to avert."

Think of the poor Duchess's anxiety and sorrow! The adored being, once so ready-witted, so alert and original, was become a moping, fantastic dreamer; he was given the choice between cheerful converse with his dearest friend on earth and solitude, and he preferred—solitude. He was as kind as ever toward the Duchess, as thoughtful and attentive; as in the old times, he would have laid down his life for her; but his heart was elsewhere. It often happened that they would row together for hours on the beautiful lake and not a word be spoken. Such conversation as was possible to them now—mere frigid exchange of ideas—might have seemed agreeable to others; but *they*, and especially the Duchess, remembered too faithfully what their intercourse had been before that fatal duel with Giletti which had been the means of parting them. Fabrice owed his friend and benefactress a detailed narrative of his nine horrible months in prison, and all he gave her was a few brief and incomplete episodes.

"It was bound to come, I suppose, sooner or later," the Duchess sadly said to herself.

Digitized by Google

"My sorrows have aged me, or else he really loves that girl, and I must be content to hold the second place in his heart." In her distress and consternation at this, the bitterest grief she could have suffered, she sometimes thought, "If it had been the will of Heaven that Ferrante should become entirely mad, or that his courage should forsake him, I might have been less wretched." This germ of repentance for a thing accomplished lowered the pride with which she had always regarded her character for firmness. "So," she said, "I form a resolution, and then repent of it; I am no longer a del Dongo!"

"It was the will of Heaven," she went on. "Fabrice is in love, and why should I wish it otherwise? Has ever a single word of love—genuine love—passed between him and me?"

This idea, which should have calmed her, spoiled her night's rest, and, in a word, as if to prove to her in the moment of her glorious vengeance that approaching age has drawbacks as well as compensations, she was more thoroughly miserable at Belgirate than she had been at Parma. And as for the person who was responsible for Fabrice's reveries, her identity was fixed beyond the

Digitized by Google

shadow of a doubt. Clelia Conti, that girl who made such a pretense of piety, had been instrumental in debauching the garrison that night, and in so doing had betrayed her father, and Fabrice had never mentioned Clelia's name! "But if the garrison had not been given wine and brandy in such quantities," the Duchess added, beating her bosom despairingly, "all my efforts and contrivances must have been unavailing; hence it is to her that is due the credit of having saved his life."

It was with the greatest difficulty that she managed to extract from Fabrice any particulars at all regarding the occurrences of that night, which, she sadly reflected, would once have afforded us a topic of such unflagging interest for our conversation. "In those happy times he was content to talk all day, and with a spirit and gaiety that never failed, on any subject, no matter how trifling, that it pleased me to introduce."

As it was necessary to be prepared for all contingencies, the Duchess had secured quarters for her nephew at the port of Locarno, a Swiss town at the extreme end of Lake Maggiore. Every day she came with her boat and they had a long excursion together

Digitized by Google

on the water. On one occasion, going up to his room for some reason or other, she found the walls of the chamber hung with numerous views of the city of Parma which he had ordered from Milan and from Parma itself, a place of which one might naturally suppose he would never care to hear the name again. His little sitting-room, transformed into a studio, was crowded with the easels and other paraphernalia of a painter in water-colors, and he was just giving the finishing touches to a third sketch of the Farnèse Tower and the Governor's palace.

"All that remains for you to do now," she said to him, with a provoked air, "is to paint from memory a portrait of that great and good man General Conti, who was so obliging as to wish to poison you. But while I think of it," she continued, "you ought to write him a nice letter apologizing for your meanness in escaping and casting ridicule on his citadel."

The poor woman had no idea that her words had so much truth in them. Fabrice's first care on reaching a place of safety had been to write an extremely polite and in one sense an extremely ridiculous letter to General Fabio Conti; he hoped to be forgiven

Digitized by Google

for having run away, alleging in excuse his belief that a certain subaltern officer of the prison had been bribed to give him poison. It mattered little to him what he wrote; Fabrice's hope was that Clelia's eyes would see the letter, and the tears ran down his cheeks while writing it. He concluded it with an odd sentence: he had no doubt, he said, that now he was at liberty he should often regret his little chamber in the Farnèse Tower. That was the dominant thought, the key of his letter; he hoped Clelia would understand. While he was in a writing mood, and always with the hope of being read by *some one*, Fabrice indited an epistle of thanks to Don Cesare, the kind-hearted chaplain, who had lent him theological works. A few days later our hero engaged the little bookseller of Locarno to make a trip to Milan, where, with the assistance of his friend, the celebrated bibliophile Reina, he purchased the most splendid editions he could find of the works loaned by Don Cesare. The worthy chaplain received the volumes, together with a florid letter in which the writer said that in moments of tedium and impatience, which he trusted might be forgiven a poor prisoner, he had bescribbled the margins of the books

Digitized by Google

with silly notes. Would His Reverence, therefore, be so kind as to replace them in his library by the accompanying volumes, which the donor forwarded with his assurance of liveliest gratitude and most profound respect?

It was certainly modest in Fabrice to give the unassuming title of *notes* to the abundant lucubrations with which he had covered the margins of a folio copy of the works of St. Jerome. With the intention of returning the book to the good father and obtaining another in its place, he had jotted down day by day a faithful account of his prison experiences. The events that he considered worthy of being commemorated were neither more nor less than fervors of *divine love* (the word "divine" was employed instead of another that he dared not use). At one time this divine love reduced the prisoner to the lowest depths of despair, at others celestial voices gave him renewed hope and awakened in him transports of felicity. All these matters, fortunately, were dimly recorded in prison ink, composed of wine, chocolate, and soot, and Don Cesare had only glanced at them casually when he restored the volume of St. Jerome to its place on the shelf. Had

Digitized by Google

he read them more attentively he would have had the satisfaction of learning that the prisoner, one day when he believed that he had been given poison, congratulated himself that he was about to die so near the object dearest to him on earth. But other eyes than the good chaplain's had scanned those pages since the flight. That noble and striking thought, *It is sweet to die near the object of one's love*, with variations *ad infinitum*, was followed by a sonnet in which it was set forth that the soul, divorced after cruel sufferings from the frail tenement that it had inhabited for three and twenty years, and impelled by that instinctive yearning after happiness that is innate in all created beings, would not rise to heaven to mingle with the angelic choir when it should be released, and in case the dread Judge should grant it forgiveness for its innumerable sins, but, happier in death than it had been during life, would wing its way to some spot near that prison within whose walls it had so long wept and groaned, and there abide the time when it should be reunited to what it held dearest upon earth. And thus, said the concluding verse of the sonnet, shall I find my earthly paradise.

Fabrice's name was never mentioned within

Digitized by Google

the citadel of Parma except as that of a vile traitor who had been recreant to the most sacred obligations; but the good priest Don Cesare was delighted at sight of the handsome volumes which came to him from an unknown quarter; for Fabrice, in the fear that his gift would be contumeliously rejected if the donor's name were known, had prudently withheld his letter for some days after the despatch of the parcel. Don Cesare did not mention the present to his brother, to whom the name of Fabrice was as a red rag to a bull; but since the young man's flight he had to some extent resumed his former habit of intimacy with his lovely niece, and as he had once taught her a little Latin he showed her the handsome books he had received. That was exactly what the fugitive had hoped he would do. Clelia suddenly blushed violently; she had recognized her lover's writing. Long and narrow strips of yellow paper, intended to serve as markers, were placed at intervals between the leaves of the volume. And as, amid all our sordid money cares and the colorless interests that fill our lives, it sometimes happens that a little divinity up aloft watches over the affairs of lovers and guides them aright, Clelia was

Digitized by Google

moved to ask her uncle's permission to compare the old copy of St. Jerome with the one he had just received. Imagine her pleasure when, in the midst of the despondency in which she was sunk by reason of Fabrice's absence, turning the leaves of the old St. Jerome, she came across the sonnet we spoke of and the tender evidences of some one's love for her!

After the first day she knew the sonnet by heart, and would stand softly crooning it to herself at her window, opposite that other window, now untenanted, where she had so often watched for the opening of the little peep-hole in the shutter. The shutter itself had been taken down and removed to the court-room, where it was to serve as an exhibit in absurd proceedings instituted by Rassi against Fabrice, accused of the crime of breaking jail, or, as the Fiscal expressed it, chuckling to himself, of "having feloniously abstracted himself from the clemency of a magnanimous sovereign"!

Clelia, reviewing past events, reproached herself severely for the part she had taken in them, and now she was unhappy her remorse was even more bitter still. She sought to appease her conscience by recalling the vow

Digitized by Google

never to see Fabrice again which she had made to the Madonna at the time of her father's illness, and had since repeated daily.

Her father had been prostrated by illness as a result of Fabrice's flight, and, moreover, had narrowly escaped losing his position when the Prince in his blind wrath dismissed all the jailers of the Farnèse Tower and sent them under guard to the city prison. That the General had not shared the others' fate was owing partly to the intercession of Count Mosca, who believed his rival would accomplish less mischief in his citadel than in the busy and intriguing precincts of the court.

It was during the two weeks pending which General Conti's fate was hanging in the balance that Clelia nerved herself to consummate the sacrifice of which she had spoken to Fabrice. She had given out that she was ill on the day of the rejoicings, which the reader will remember was also the day of Fabrice's escape. She was ill the next day too, and, in a word, conducted herself so discreetly that with the exception of Grillo, the turnkey who had the prisoner under his special charge, no one suspected her of complicity, and Grillo had good reasons for being silent.

Digitized by Google

But Clelia's fears in that regard were no more than laid to rest than her just remorse began to torture her most horribly. "What earthly excuse is there," she said to herself, "for a girl who deceives her father?"

One evening, after a day spent almost entirely in the chapel praying and weeping, she begged her uncle, Don Cesare, to go with her to the General, whose outbursts of rage were none the less distasteful to her that they were continually interlarded with foul abuse of Fabrice, that abominable traitor.

When in her father's presence she had the courage to tell him that if she had persisted in refusing the offer of the Marquis Crescenzi's hand, it was because she felt no inclination for him and was certain the alliance could never result happily for either of them. At these words the General began to storm, and it was some time before Clelia could go on with what she wished to say. She added that if her father, under the temptation of the Marquis's enormous fortune, thought it right to order her to marry him, she was ready to obey. The General was greatly surprised by this peroration, which was totally unexpected; however, it put him in good humor for a time. "I sha'n't be reduced to

Digitized by Google

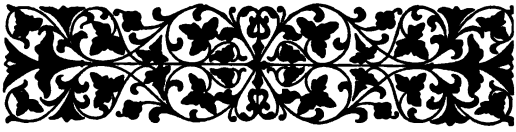
a crust and a garret now," he said to his brother, "in case I lose my situation in consequence of that blackguard del Dongo's rascally behavior."

Count Mosca was at pains to show in public how profoundly he was shocked by the reprehensible course of that "young scapegrace" Fabrice in abandoning his prison, and repeated whenever occasion offered that phrase of Rassi's invention on the ignoble conduct of a person who could "basely abstract himself from the clemency of a generous prince." These noble words, approved and adopted in polite circles, did not take with the people. In private, while disapproving Fabrice's course, he could not help admiring the courage the young man had shown in making that tremendous descent. But he was the only one about the court who had a good word to say of the prisoner's pluck. As for the police, who felt the humiliation of their defeat, their official investigation demonstrated that a band of twenty soldiers, seduced by the lavishly scattered money of the Duchess—that ungrateful woman whose name no one could mention without a groan of horror—had brought to the foot of the tower four ladders, firmly

Digitized by Google

fastened end to end by means of cords, each ladder being forty-five feet long, and that Fabrice, having let down a rope which the men made fast to the ladders, had only the cheap merit of hauling them up to the summit of the tower. Some notoriously reckless Liberals, among them Dr. C——, known to be a paid agent of the Prince, asserted (but they compromised themselves) that the inhuman police authorities had been instrumental in procuring death-sentences against eight of the luckless soldiers who had assisted that ingrate Fabrice in his flight. Thereon he was censured even by the genuine Liberals as having by his imprudence caused the death of eight poor soldiers. Such are the methods employed by petty despotisms to mislead public opinion.

Digitized by Google



XXIII

AMID the storm of obloquy and detraction that raged round Fabrice's head his friend the venerable Archbishop alone remained faithful in adversity. In reply to the young man's enemies, even to those of most exalted rank, he urged the maxim of justice that no criminal, however strong appearances may be against him, shall be deprived of his right to be heard in his own defense.

On the day succeeding Fabrice's escape several persons in the city received a weak, bombastic sonnet celebrating the flight as one of the greatest achievements of the age, and comparing the hero of it to an angel floating down to earth on outspread wings. On the day after that a really noble sonnet was in everybody's mouth. It purported to be Fabrice's monologue as he glided down the

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

rope, reviewing the various incidents of his life. Two magnificent verses in it outshone the rest. Connoisseurs all recognized the style of Ferrante Palla.

At this point I should be glad could I use the epic style for a time; how else am I to find words in which to depict the torrents of indignation that suddenly flooded all loyal hearts when tidings were received of the insolent illuminations at Sacca? One universal howl went up against the Duchess; even the Liberals joined in it, declaring that such proceedings only served to imperil the lives of the poor suspects confined in the different prisons, and irritated the sovereign without accomplishing any useful end. Count Mosca asserted that the Duchess's friends had but one course left them, which was to forget her. The concert of execration, therefore, was unanimous. A stranger passing through the city would have been struck by the energy with which popular feeling displayed itself. But in that country, where the pleasures of revenge are appreciated so keenly, the illumination and the admirable fête given in the park to more than six thousand peasants had an immense success. Every one at Parma was telling how the Duchess had distributed

Digitized by Google

a thousand sequins among her poor, and it was to this circumstance that was attributed the unfriendly reception accorded to some thirty gendarmes that the authorities had the stupidity to despatch to the little village thirty-six hours after the memorable evening and the universal drunkenness that resulted from it. The gendarmes, received with a shower of stones and brickbats, turned tail and fled, and two of their number, tumbling from their horses, got a free bath in the Po.

As for the rupture of the great reservoir of the Sanseverina palace, it passed almost unnoticed. Some of the streets had more or less water in them during the night; in the morning the early riser would have said there had been a fall of rain. Ludovic had taken the precaution to smash the glass in one of the palace windows, so that whatever mischief was done was set down to the account of robbers. A small ladder was also found near at hand. Count Mosca alone recognized the genius of his fair friend.

Fabrice was fully resolved to return to Parma as soon as he could do so with any degree of safety. He made Ludovic the bearer of a long letter to the Archbishop, and that faithful servant returned immedi-

Digitized by Google

ately to Sannazaro, a village of Piedmont lying west of Pavia, where he posted a lengthy Latin epistle that the worthy prelate had written to his young protégé. We will mention a small detail which, like others of the same kind, will probably appear frivolous in countries where such precaution is not necessary. The name Fabrice del Dongo never appeared on envelopes; all letters for that person were addressed to Ludovic San-Micheli, either at Locarno in Switzerland or at Belgirate in Piedmont. The envelope was of the cheapest, commonest kind of paper, it was sealed in a slovenly manner, the superscription was almost illegible; the general appearance of the missive would seem to indicate that it was the production of an ignorant servant-girl. All letters were dated from Naples, six days in advance of their real date.

From Sannazaro Ludovic posted back in hot haste to Parma. His errand was in Fabrice's eyes one of supreme importance—neither more nor less than to convey to Clelia Conti a handkerchief on which was printed a sonnet by Petrarch. It is true that there was one word changed in the sonnet. Clelia found it on her writing-table two days after receiving the thanks of the Marquis Cres-

Digitized by Google

cenzi, who declared himself the happiest of men; and it is unnecessary to describe the impression that this token of constancy produced on her heart.

Ludovic had instructions to procure as full details as possible of what was going on at the citadel. He it was who conveyed to Fabrice the sad tidings that the Marquis Crescenzi's marriage was no longer to be considered as among the probabilities. Scarcely a day passed that he did not give an entertainment in Clelia's honor at the fortress. An unmistakable proof that the marriage was decided on was that the Marquis—immensely rich and consequently extremely avaricious, as is generally the case among the millionaires of northern Italy—was making extensive preparations; and yet he was about to take to wife a girl who brought no dowry with her. This little circumstance, which was a universal subject of remark among his acquaintances and fellow-townsmen, was like gall and wormwood to General Conti's vanity. Accordingly he proceeded to purchase an estate costing more than three hundred thousand francs; but, as the old man had not a penny to bless himself with, the general presumption was that the prop-

Digitized by Google

erty was paid for from the Marquis's bank-account. The General published it abroad that the new acquisition was to be his wedding-gift to his daughter. But to the Marquis, eminently practical person that he was, the notary's fees and other expenses, aggregating some twelve thousand francs, seemed a shameful waste of money. For his part, he had given to the manufacturers of Lyons extensive orders for hangings, calculated to delight the eye by their rich colors and harmonious arrangement, the designs for which were furnished by the celebrated Pallagi of Bologna. These tapestries, each of which was to contain a *motif* taken from the arms of the Crescenzi family—which, as all the world knows, originated with the renowned Crescentius, Consul of Rome in the year 985—were to adorn the seventeen salons that formed the *rez-de-chaussée* of the Marquis's palace. The value of the hangings, clocks, and chandeliers delivered at Parma exceeded three hundred thousand francs, while the new mirrors, irrespective of those already in the house, cost upward of two hundred thousand francs. With the exception of two salons, the work of the famous Parmeggiano—after the divine Correggio the greatest painter of

Digitized by Google

the country—all the apartments of the first and second floors were now filled with the most eminent artists of Rome, Florence, and Milan, who had been employed to decorate the walls in fresco. Fokelberg, the great Swedish sculptor, Tenerani of Rome, and Marchesi of Milan had been engaged for a year on ten bas-reliefs representing as many deeds of valor in the life of the hero Crescentius. Most of the ceilings, decorated in fresco, also offered some tribute to his memory. An object of general admiration was the ceiling on which Hayez of Milan had depicted Crescentius's reception in the Elysian Fields by Francesco Sforza, Lorenzo the Magnificent, King Robert, Machiavelli, Dante, the Tribune Cola di Rienzi, and other great men of the Middle Ages. The expression of admiration for these illustrious personages is supposed to be a protest against the men in power.

All these magnificences formed a topic of never-failing interest to the nobility and commonalty of Parma, and went like a dagger to poor Fabrice's heart when he came to read of them as described with naïve wonder by the worthy Ludovic in a letter twenty pages long, which he had dictated to a customs-officer at Casal-Maggiore.

Digitized by Google

"And I am so poor!" the young man murmured; "four thousand francs a year in all for all my needs! It is little short of impudence to aspire to love Clelia, for whom such miracles are performed."

One paragraph of Ludovic's long letter was written in his own detestable handwriting. In it he informed his master that he had met Grillo, his quondam jailer, one evening, slinking along the walls like one desirous of avoiding observation. The poor man had been imprisoned, but subsequently released. He had asked for a sequin in the name of charity. Ludovic gave him four, and told him they were from the Duchess. The old jailers, twelve in number, recently set at liberty, were preparing to welcome their successors with a feast of knives (*trattamente di cortellate*) if ever they caught them outside the citadel. Grillo said that there was a serenade at the fortress almost every day; that the Signorina Conti was very pale, often ill, and "other things like that." This intelligence was the cause of Ludovic receiving instructions by next mail to return to Locarno. He obeyed, and the oral accounts he gave were even more discouraging to Fabrice.

Digitized by Google

The latter, in his anxiety to avoid giving the poor Duchess pain, would have died a thousand deaths rather than mention Clelia Conti's name in her presence. The Duchess detested Parma, while for Fabrice that city was full of sublime and tender memories.

She had not forgotten her schemes of vengeance—she had been so happy before the incident of Giletti's death, while now what was her lot! She lived in constant expectation of hearing that something terrible had happened, a thing of which she could not for her life have breathed a word to Fabrice, she who once, at the time of her arrangement with Ferrante, had thought to give Fabrice such pleasure by telling him he was to be avenged.

The reader can decide for himself whether the intercourse between the young man and his aunt was cheerful. A funereal silence, scarce ever broken, reigned whenever they were together. As if to make their relations more pleasurable, the Duchess had yielded to the temptation of doing her nephew, too fondly loved, an ill turn. The Count was in the habit of writing to her almost daily. He was apparently as lavish in the use of couriers as in their happier days, for his letters were

Digitized by Google

always postmarked from some small town in Switzerland. The poor man racked his brains to avoid dwelling at too great length on his love, and to make his letters interesting. It was as much as ever if they were scanned with a careless eye. What comfort is there in the fidelity of one lover when, alas! one's heart is racked by the coldness of the other, the preferred one?

In the space of two months the Duchess replied to him but once, and that was to request him to sound the Princess and ascertain if, notwithstanding the affront of the illumination, it would be agreeable to Her Highness to receive a letter from her. The letter he was to present, if he judged best to do so, begged the appointment of the Marquis Crescenzi to the post, vacant at that time, of *chevalier d'honneur* to the Princess, and desired it to be expressed that the honor conferred was in recognition of his approaching marriage. The Duchess's letter was a production of genius; it breathed the tenderest respect couched in the most elegant terms; not a word was admitted that could by any, even the remotest, inference awaken disagreeable recollections in the Princess's mind. And when the answer came its tone

Digitized by Google

was that of tender affection wronged by absence.

"My son and I," said the royal lady, "have had scarcely one endurable evening since your abrupt departure. Has my dear Duchess, then, forgotten that it is to her I am indebted for having some voice in the appointment of the officers of my household? She seems to consider herself obliged to give reasons for requesting the position for the Marquis, as if the mere expression of her wish were not in my eyes the first and best of reasons. The Marquis shall have the place if I have anything to say in regard to the matter, and my charming Duchess too shall have a place and keep it—the first and warmest in my heart. My son says he agrees with me—though the expression may seem a little warm to come from the lips of a strapping young fellow of twenty-one—and wishes to know if you can send him some geological specimens from the valley of Orta, near Belgirate. You may address your letters, of which I trust you will not be too economical, to the Count, who detests you as fervently as ever, and whom I honor for his sentiments. The Archbishop also remains faithful in his allegiance to you. We all

Digitized by Google

hope to see you again some day; do not disappoint us. The Marquise Ghisleri, my mistress of the robes, is about to quit this world for a better one. The poor woman has been a source of great annoyance to me in her time; she vexes me now by choosing this inopportune time for dying. Her illness brings to my mind a name which it would have given me much pleasure to substitute for hers, if I could have hoped to obtain so great a sacrifice from the independence of that phenix of women who, in leaving us, took with her all the joy of my little court—" etc.

It was therefore with the consciousness of having done her best to hasten the marriage that would wreck all Fabrice's hopes that the Duchess was compelled to meet him every day. They would pass hours at a time sailing together on the lake, and not a word would be exchanged between them. This was not from any lack of friendliness on Fabrice's part, but he was thinking of other matters, and in his honest, simple heart could find nothing to say. She saw it, and therein lay her punishment.

We forgot to mention in its proper place that the Duchess had hired a house at Belgirate, a pretty village, which fulfils the prom-

Digitized by Google

ise of its name (beautiful curve). She could step into her boat from her parlor window. The craft she had hired was a very unassuming one, for which four oarsmen would have been all-sufficient. She engaged twelve, and arranged matters so that one of them should always be on duty at each of the villages adjacent to Belgirate. The third or fourth time she was out on the lake with her selected crew she bade them cease rowing.

"I regard you all as friends of mine," she said to them, "and I have a secret that I want to tell you. My nephew Fabrice has escaped from prison, and it is likely that unfair means will be attempted to recapture him, although he is here on your beautiful lake, in a land of freedom. Be watchful and report to me anything you may learn. You have my permission to enter my chamber at any hour of the day or night."

The rowers answered with a hearty cheer; she had the knack of gaining the love of men. But it was not of Fabrice's capture she was thinking; it was on her own behalf that all these precautions were observed, and before her fatal order to empty the reservoir of the Sanseverina palace she would not have dreamed of such a thing.

Digitized by Google

As a measure of prudence she had secured a suite of rooms for Fabrice at the port of Locarno. He came to visit her every day, or else she crossed the frontier into Switzerland. One circumstance will suffice to show how agreeable these perpetual tête-à-têtes must have been. The Marquise and her daughters came twice to visit them, and the company of those strangers gave them pleasure; for, notwithstanding the ties of consanguinity, those may be called strangers who know nothing of our dearest interests and whom we see but once a year.

One evening the Duchess was at Locarno, in the young man's apartment, with the Marquise and her two daughters. The Archpriest of the district and the Curé dropped in to pay their respects to the ladies. The Archpriest, who had an interest in a commercial house and made it his business to keep abreast of the news of the day, remarked:

"I see the Prince of Parma is dead."

The Duchess turned pale as death; she had scarce sufficient strength to ask:

"Have you the particulars?"

"No," replied the Archpriest; "the despatch only stated that he is dead, but it may be relied on."

Digitized by Google

The Duchess looked at Fabrice. "I committed that crime for his sake," she thought, "as I would have committed a thousand others, and there he sits before me, indifferent, thinking of another! The bitter reflection was more than her strength could bear; she swooned. Every one darted forward to her relief, but on coming to she noticed that Fabrice showed less concern than the Archpriest and the Curé; as usual, he was in cloudland.

"He is thinking of returning to Parma," said the Duchess to herself, "and perhaps breaking off the marriage between Clelia and the Marquis; but I 'll find a way of thwarting that fine scheme." Then, mindful of the presence of the two priests, she made haste to add aloud:

"He was a great prince, and was much calumniated while he lived. It will be a severe loss to the country!"

The holy men retired, and the Duchess, desirous to be alone, said she would go to bed.

"There is no doubt," she reflected, "that it would be more prudent to wait a month or two before returning to Parma, but I have not the patience; it is too painful for me here. The sight of Fabrice's clouded face,

Digitized by Google

his continual brooding silence, is more than I can bear. Who would have thought that, after doing a thing I dare not confess to him to avenge his wrongs, to be with him alone on this beautiful lake would be but a source of weariness? After such an experience death has no terrors. I am paying now for the transports of happiness and childish delight that I experienced in my palace at Parma when I received Fabrice there on his return from Naples. One word from me then would have solved the difficulty, and perhaps, bound to me by ties of tenderness, he would have never thought of that little Clelia; but that word would have cost me too much to speak. Now she triumphs over me. Is it not quite natural? She is twenty years old, while I, sick in mind and body, changed by cares and sorrows, am twice her age. It is time to die and make an end of it! What is a woman of forty to the men who loved her in the flush of youth? Naught remains for me but the pleasures of vanity; and are they worth living for? All the more reason why I should go to Parma and amuse myself. If things should turn out in a certain way they would take my life. Well, is that so greatly to be dreaded? I should

Digitized by Google

make a handsome corpse, and before the end, but only then, I would say to Fabrice, 'Ingrate, it is all for thee!' Yes, I can find occupation for the brief span of life that is left me nowhere save at Parma. I will play the part of the great lady. How fortunate could I now find pleasure in all those distinctions which once made the Raversi woman so miserable! In those days, to know when I was happy I had only to look in the eyes of envy. My vanity has one comfort: with the exception of the Count, perhaps, no one will guess what it was that ended my life of the affections. I shall continue to love Fabrice; I will watch over his fortunes; but he must not break off Clelia's marriage and marry her afterward—no, that shall never be!"

The Duchess had reached this point of her sorrowful monologue when she heard a loud noise in the house.

"Good!" she said to herself, "they are come to arrest me. Ferrante has let himself be caught and blabbed. Very well, so much the better! I shall have something to occupy my mind; I shall have to fight to keep my head on my shoulders. But to begin with, I must not let them catch me."

In her half-clad condition she ran for it

Digitized by Google

and hid at the foot of her garden. There she was deliberating whether or no to climb the low wall and continue her flight across the open country, when she saw some one enter her chamber. She recognized Bruno, the Count's confidential man; he was alone with her maid. She returned and approached the low window. The man was telling the maid of injuries he had received. The Duchess reëntered her room. Bruno threw himself at her feet, entreating her not to tell the Count that he had arrived at such an untimely hour.

"Immediately upon the Prince's death," he added, "my master despatched orders to all the post-houses to furnish no horses to subjects of Parma. I was consequently obliged to use our own horses to reach the Po; but on leaving the ferry-boat my carriage was upset and smashed, and I was so severely bruised that I could not proceed on horseback, as it was my place to do."

"Very good," said the Duchess; "it is three o'clock; I will say you arrived at midnight; but mind you stick to the story and do not contradict me."

"Madame is very kind."

To introduce politics in a work of enter-

Digitized by Google

tainment is like discharging a pistol in the middle of a concert—an unseemly performance, and yet one to which it is impossible not to give attention.

We have some unpleasant matters to relate that for more than one reason we would gladly suppress; but the events we speak of are clearly in our province, having, as they do, their theater in the hearts of our characters.

"But tell me, what was the manner of the Prince's death?" the Duchess asked of Bruno.

"He was shooting ducks in the marshes along the Po, two leagues from Sacca. He fell into a mud-hole concealed by a tuft of grass; he was perspiring violently and took a chill. His servants carried him to a little house hard by, where he died within a few hours. It is reported that the Signori Catena and Borone are also dead, and that the accident was due to the verdigris on the copper saucepans of the peasant in whose house they sought refuge. They ate breakfast there. The Jacobins, lunatics that they are, talk of poison; the wish is father to the thought with them. I know that my friend Toto, who was acting as beater to the Prince, would have died but for the attentions of a rustic

Digitized by Google

who seemed to have great skill in medicine and gave him strange remedies. But people have ceased to talk of the Prince's death; the truth is he was too cruel to have his subjects' love. As I was leaving the people were collecting to murder Rassi, the fiscal general. There was also some talk of firing the citadel in order to free the prisoners, but it was urged that General Conti would open on the rioters with his artillery; others declared that the gunners had damped their powder and would not turn their pieces on their fellow-citizens. But here is something of more interest: while the surgeon Sandolaro was fixing up my poor arm a man just arrived from Parma told us that the mob, having encountered Barbone, the infamous clerk of the prison, in the street, had given the fellow a terrible beating and carried him off to hang him to a tree before the citadel. The rioters were on the march to go and demolish the fine statue of the Prince that stands in the garden of the palace, but the Count headed a battalion of the Guards, formed it in front of the statue, and warned the people that not one of them who entered the garden should leave it living. That made them draw in their horns. But what I can't understand,

Digitized by Google

although the man from Parma, who was once a gendarme, told it to me more than once, is why the Count should have kicked General P——, commanding the Prince's body-guard, torn off his epaulets, and sent him out of the garden escorted by two fusileers."

"That is the Count all over," exclaimed the Duchess, with such a thrill of delight as a moment before she never expected to feel again; "he could not stand by and see our Princess insulted. And as for General P——, his devotion to his legitimate sovereign would not permit him to draw his sword under the usurper, while the Count, less squeamish, served through all the Spanish campaigns—a circumstance that he has often been twitted with at the court."

The Duchess had unsealed the Count's letter, but dropped the perusal of it every now and then to question Bruno.

The letter made strange reading. The Count wrote in the most lugubrious terms, and yet evidence of his sincere and lively delight was manifest in every line. He had little to say in regard to the manner of the Prince's death, and concluded with these words:

Digitized by Google

"You will doubtless return here, dear angel, but I advise you to wait for the courier that the Princess will send you to-day or to-morrow, as I hope; your return must be as glorious as your departure was audacious. As for the great criminal whom you are harboring, I expect to have him tried by twelve judges drawn from different parts of the country. But to punish the monster as he deserves, I must first make curl-papers of the first sentence, provided it is in existence."

The Count had reopened his letter to add a postscript:

"I have more news for you. I have just ordered a distribution of ball-cartridge to the two battalions of Guards. I am going to show fight, and do my best to merit the epithet *cruel* with which my friends the Liberals have been pleased to honor me for some time past. That old granny, General P——, dared to talk in barracks of offering terms to the people, already more than half-way on the road to rebellion. I am writing this in the street; I am on my way to the palace, which the mob shall enter only over my dead body. Adieu! If I fall, I shall die as I have lived, loving you *quand même.*

Digitized by Google

Don't forget to draw the three hundred thousand francs deposited in your name with the banker at Lyons.

"You should see that white-livered sneak, Rassi, pale as a ghost and minus his wig; you can't imagine what a figure he cuts! The people want to hang him; it would be doing him a great injustice—he should be drawn and quartered. He took refuge in my palace and followed me to the street. I am at a loss what to do with him. I don't want to take him with me to the palace; it would be an invitation to the mob to follow. F—— shall see whether or not I love him. My first word to Rassi was, 'I want the sentence against Monsignor del Dongo, and all the copies of it that are extant; and tell those perjured judges who are responsible for this rebellion that I will hang them every one—and you with them, my dear friend—if they ever breathe a word of that sentence, which never existed legally.' I am sending a company of grenadiers to protect the Archbishop, for Fabrice's sake. Adieu once more, dear angel! My house will be burned and I shall lose all the precious likenesses I have of you. I am going to the palace to see to the dismissal of that infamous General P——, who

Digitized by Google

is up to his old tricks; he is truckling to the mob as he used to truckle to the late Prince. All the generals are scared half out of their wits. I think I shall have myself appointed commander-in-chief."

The Duchess was so hard-hearted as not to send and awaken Fabrice. She felt an admiration for the Count that very strongly resembled love. "All things considered," she said to herself, "I think I shall have to marry him." She wrote to him immediately and sent off the letter by one of her people. She had not time that night to remember she was unhappy.

The next day, about noon, she saw a boat manned by ten rowers approaching, swiftly cleaving the blue waters of the lake. Fabrice and she presently descried a man in the livery of the Prince of Parma; it was in truth one of the royal couriers, who shouted, before the boat touched land, "The rebellion is subdued!" The courier handed her several inclosures from the Count, a charming letter from the Princess, and a decree, engrossed on parchment and signed by Prince Ranuccio Ernesto V, constituting her Duchess of San Giovanni and Mistress of the Robes to the Princess Dowager. The young

Digitized by Google

man of mineralogical tastes, and whom she had always considered a little weak in his upper story, had found time in the midst of his new duties to write her a brief note. There was a slight perfume of gallantry at the close. The note opened in this way:

"The Count, Madame la Duchesse, professes to be satisfied with my behavior; it is true that I smelt powder at his side and had a horse shot under me. If people make such an ado over so small an affair, I should like to have a hand in a real battle—only I trust it will not be against my subjects. I am debtor to the Count for everything. My generals, who have had no experience in the field, acted like poltroons; two or three of them ran away, and I think did not stop this side of Bologna. Since my accession to power under such melancholy circumstances I have signed no ordinance that was more agreeable to me than that which places you in confidential relations with my mother. My mother and I remembered the admiration you expressed one day for the magnificent prospect from the *palazzeto* of San Giovanni, which once, unless tradition lies, belonged to Petrarch. My mother determined to present

Digitized by Google

you with the property, and I, not knowing what to give you, and not daring to offer all that is your due, have created you a duchess of my country. I don't know if you are enough of a genealogist to be aware that Sanseverina is a Roman title. I have conferred the grand cordon of my order on the good Archbishop, who displayed rare firmness for a man of seventy. You won't find fault with me for having recalled all the banished ladies. I am told that henceforth I must put *Your affectionate* before my signature in signing letters; I regret that I am directed to say a thing which can be entirely true only when I am writing to you.

"*Your affectionate*
"RANUCCIO ERNESTO."

After such a letter one would naturally suppose that the Duchess was about to enjoy the highest favor. She was a good deal perplexed, however, by other letters from the Count which arrived two hours later. He did not enter into explanations, but advised her to defer her return to Parma for a few days and write the Princess that she was indisposed. None the less Fabrice and the Duchess set out for Parma immediately after

Digitized by Google

dinner. The Duchess's object, which she naturally kept locked in her own bosom, was to assist the Marquis Crescenzi in his marriage projects; while Fabrice, for his part, made the journey in a mad exuberance of spirits that seemed to his aunt absurd. He hoped to see his Clelia again soon; he meant to carry her off, *vi et armis*, whether she would or no, if there should be no other means than that of breaking off her marriage.

The journey was made safely and with great gaiety. At the last stage before reaching Parma Fabrice made a brief halt to resume the ecclesiastical habit; his ordinary attire was black, the garb of one in mourning. On returning to the Duchess's room:

"There is something about the Count's letters that I don't quite like," she said to him; "they are too ambiguous. If you will be ruled by me you will remain here a few hours. I will send a courier to you as soon as I shall have seen the Minister."

Fabrice objected strenuously to this wise recommendation, but finally yielded. The Count received the Duchess, whom he called his wife, with transports befitting a lad of

Digitized by Google

fifteen. It was a long time before he could be prevailed on to speak of politics, and when at last he came down to sober facts:

"You did well in preventing Fabrice from entering the city as yet; a reaction has set in. Guess, if you can, whom the Prince has given me as Minister of Justice! Rassi, my dear—Rassi, whom I used to treat like a cur whenever we had business together. By the way, I must inform you that all the recent occurrences have been suppressed. If you read the *Gazette* you will see that a clerk of the prison, named Barbone, died from the effects of a fall from a carriage. As for the sixty and odd rascals whom my infantry disposed of while attempting to pull down the Prince's statue, they are all in excellent health, only they are away traveling. Count Zurla, the minister of the interior, went in person to the abode of each of those unfortunate heroes and presented their families or friends with fifteen sequins, at the same time ordering them to say that the deceased was traveling for his health, and warning them that the prison yawned for them in case they dared to say he was dead. A man from my own office, the Foreign Affairs, was despatched to Milan and Turin charged with

Digitized by Google

the mission of persuading the editors there to muzzle their sheets in regard to recent *unfortunate occurrences*—that is the time-honored phrase. The same man has instructions to proceed to Paris and London and contradict in all the papers, quasi-officially, whatever may be said about our troubles. Another agent was sent to Florence and Bologna. All the protest I made was to shrug my shoulders.

"But the cream of the joke was *my* getting on my high horse, at my age, haranguing the battalions of the Guards, and tearing the epaulets from General P's—— shoulders, the old mummy. I would have laid down my life just then for the Prince, without a moment's hesitation. I am free to confess now it would have been a very unwise proceeding. The Prince to-day, although he is a kind-hearted and good young man, would give a hundred crowns to hear I was dead. He does not dare as yet to ask for my resignation, but we speak to each other as little as possible, and I make my reports in writing, as I used to do with the late Prince after Fabrice's confinement. By the way, I have not made curl-papers of his sentence yet, for the good and sufficient reason that that

Digitized by Google

scoundrel Rassi has not turned it over to me. So it is well you did not let Fabrice show himself here under his own name at the moment. The sentence is still valid, and while I don't think Rassi would venture to arrest our nephew to-day, there is no telling what he may do in two weeks. If Fabrice insists on coming into the city, let him come and live with me."

"But what has caused this state of affairs?" the Duchess inquired.

"It has been suggested to His Highness that I am posing as the savior of the country and assuming dictatorial airs; that I wish to hold him in leading-strings; worse still, that in speaking of him I used the unpardonable expression *that boy*. It may be true; I was a little daft that day. I thought I saw the making of a great man in him because he was not over-timid the first time he was under fire. He has a certain amount of cleverness, his manner is better than his father's, and I say again, he is honest and good-hearted; but his sincere young soul revolts at anything that smacks of duplicity, and he thinks because a diplomat must lie occasionally his heart must be black as ink. Remember how he has been brought up!"

Digitized by Google

"Your Excellency should bear in mind that he will be master here some day, and give him a companion and adviser on whom you can rely."

"In the first place, we have the example of the Abbé de Condillac before us, who was summoned to power by my predecessor, the Marquis de Felino, and only succeeded in making his pupil the king of blockheads. He walked in processions, and in 1796 had not the sense to treat with General Bonaparte, who would have tripled the extent of his dominions. Secondly, it was never my expectation to remain minister ten years. Now that I see the emptiness of it all, as I have done for the last few months, I would like to amass a million and then cut loose from this powder-mill that I saved. Had it not been for me, Parma would have been a republic for a couple of months, with the poet Ferrante Palla for dictator."

The Duchess blushed; the Count knew nothing.

"We are about retrograding to the form of government that prevailed in the eighteenth century, when the mistress and the confessor held the reins of power. The Prince is really in love with nothing ex-

Digitized by Google

cepting mineralogy—and you, perhaps, madame. Since he began to reign, his chief valet—whose brother I lately made a captain in the army after nine months' service—has been trying to convince him that he should be happier than other men, because his effigy will be stamped on the crown-pieces. That brilliant idea was succeeded by an attack of ennui.

"Now he must have an aide-de-camp to cure him of his ennui. Well, I don't intend to be that remedy and spend four or five hours daily in His Highness's company, not even if he should offer us that million we need so badly to keep us going at Paris or Naples. Besides, as my intelligence is greater than his, at the end of a month he would say I was a monster.

"The late Prince was cruel and suspicious, but he had seen service in the field and commanded army-corps, which gave him a certain dignity of bearing. There was the stuff of a prince in him, and I could serve him as minister without loss of self-respect. With the son, an honest man, truthful and really good at heart, I am forced to be an intriguer. I am the competitor of the lowest kitchen-wench in the château, and a competitor on

Digitized by Google

unequal terms; for I cannot stoop to master the thousand necessary petty details of the business. For instance, three days ago, owing to the carelessness of the woman whose duty it is to put clean towels in the apartments every morning, the key of the Prince's English desk was lost, whereon His Highness refused to attend to the important business the papers relating to which were in that desk. It is very true that for a few francs the bottom boards might have been removed or the lock opened with false keys, but no, Ranuccio Ernesto V would not hear to such a thing; he said it would be teaching the court locksmith bad habits.

"Thus far he has not had firmness enough to be of one mind three days running. Had he been born a nobleman with a respectable fortune the young Prince would have been one of the most estimable men about the court,—a sort of Louis XVI; but how is he to escape the snares and pitfalls that surround him on every side with his honest naïveté? The salon of your old foe, Mme. Raversi, exerts a more powerful influence than ever; its habitués have discovered that I, who gave orders to fire on the mob, and was resolved to shoot down three thousand men, if necessary,

Digitized by Google

rather than let the statue of the Prince, my former master, be desecrated, am a rabid Liberal, that I favor a constitution, and a hundred more absurdities of that nature. It is with trashy talk like that that the madmen would shut us out from enjoying the best of governments. Finally, madame, you are the only person in the Liberal party as it is constituted to-day—of which my enemies do me the honor to make me the leader—of whom the Prince has not spoken unkindly. The Archbishop, who can't help being an honest man, because he took a reasonable view of my conduct on the *unfortunate day* is in deep disgrace.

"On the day succeeding that which was not yet called *unfortunate*, when it was still admitted that there had been a rebellion, the Prince said to the Archbishop that, in order that you might not have to take an inferior title, as you would if you married me, he would create me a duke. To-day I hear that Rassi, whom I ennobled for selling to me the secrets of his late master, is to be made a count. I should be a blockhead to accept promotion in such company."

"And the poor Prince will be in a hole."

"Of course; but as he is in reality the

Digitized by Google

master, in less than two weeks people will cease to laugh at him. So, dear Duchess, let's you and I do as they do in the game of checkers—move."

"But we are not rich enough."

"Great wealth is not a necessity to either you or me. If at Naples you will let me have a horse and a place in your box at the San Carlo I shall be more than content. It is not display, more or less ostentatious, that will give you and me position in the world; it is the pleasure that the best people of the city where we live will find in dropping in to drink a cup of tea with you."

"But what would have been the result," the Duchess continued, "if on the *unfortunate day* you had kept yourself in the background, as I hope you will do in future?"

"The troops would have fraternized with the populace, there would have been three days of slaughter and incendiarism, succeeded by two weeks of pillage (for it will take a century for this country to become acclimated to republican institutions), until in the end our neighbors sent in their battalions to quell the disturbance. Ferrante Palla was among the people, full of courage and rampant as usual. He had perhaps a dozen friends acting in con-

Digitized by Google

cert with him, a fact that will serve Rassi as the foundation on which to erect the superstructure of a magnificent conspiracy. One thing is certain: that while wearing a coat that would have cast discredit on a beggar, he was throwing away gold with both his hands."

The Duchess, greatly marveling at all she had heard, hurried off to thank the Princess.

As she entered the room the lady in attendance handed her the small golden key that was worn at the belt and constituted the badge of supreme authority in that portion of the palace occupied by the Princess. Clara-Paolina immediately dismissed her company. When alone with her friend, however, she seemed embarrassed and disinclined to confidence. The Duchess could not understand what it all meant, and preserved a defensive attitude. At last the Princess burst into tears, and, throwing herself into the Duchess's arms, cried:

"My evil days are come again; my son promises to treat me worse than did his father!"

"I will see to that," the Duchess quickly replied. "But first of all permit me to lay at Your Highness's feet the assurance of

Digitized by Google

my profound gratitude and unbounded respect."

"What do you mean?" the Princess anxiously exclaimed; she feared that a resignation was forthcoming.

"I see on the mantelpiece one of those hideous little Chinese idols that wag their heads; as often as I turn it to the right will Your Highness permit me to call things by their real name?"

"Is that all, dear Duchess?" cried Clara-Paolina, getting up and turning the ugly little ornament in the position indicated. "Speak freely and relieve your mind, Madame Mistress of the Robes," she playfully said.

"Madame," the latter replied, "Your Highness is fully acquainted with the situation; the greatest dangers are impending over both you and me. Fabrice's sentence has not been rescinded, and whenever it shall please the powers that be to rid themselves of me and cast an indignity on you, they will put him back in prison. Our position is as bad as it ever was. As for myself, I shall marry the Count, and we will go and set up our household gods at Naples or at Paris. The last instance of ingratitude that my friend was subjected to has sickened him of

Digitized by Google

the entire business, and were it not for Your Serene Highness's interests I should not advise him to remain a moment longer in this wretched muddle, except on the condition that the Prince treated him with greater liberality. I beg leave to state to Your Highness that the Count, who had a hundred and thirty thousand francs when he came into office, is to-day worth barely twenty thousand francs a year. Many times I have urged him to think of his fortune, to no purpose. During my absence he forced a quarrel with the Prince's farmers general, who were robbers; he replaced them by other robbers, and is the richer by eight hundred thousand francs."

"What!" ejaculated the Princess, in astonishment. "Good heavens, I am sorry to hear that!"

"Is it madame's wish that I should turn the idol to the left?" the Duchess asked, with perfect unconcern.

"No, no," replied the Princess, "but I regret that a man of Count Mosca's reputation should have stooped to enrich himself in that way."

"He would have had the contempt of all honest men had he not done so."

Digitized by Google

"Good God! you don't mean that?"

"Madame," replied the Duchess, "with the exception of my friend the Marquis Crescenzi, whose yearly income is three or four hundred thousand francs, everybody here makes it a practice to steal. How could they be expected not to in a country where gratitude for the most splendid services does not last quite a month? The only solid, substantial thing that survives disgrace is money. I am going to tell you some terrible truths, madame."

"You have my permission," rejoined the Princess, with a deep sigh, "but they are cruelly disagreeable truths to hear."

"Well, madame, the Prince, your son, though a perfectly well-meaning man, is likely to cause you even more unhappiness than did his father. The late sovereign's temperament did not differ greatly from that of other men. Our present ruler is not sure of his own mind three days consecutively; the only way to be certain of him is to live with him all the while and keep him shut off from all external influence. As this is a truth patent to almost any one, the new ultra party, under the guidance of those two long-headed individuals, Rassi and the Mar-

Digitized by Google

quise Raversi, will presently be seeking to provide the Prince with a mistress. This mistress will have permission to feather her nest and make a few minor appointments; but she will be held responsible to the party for keeping His Highness straight in the traces.

"What I want, in order to be established at Your Highness's court on the footing I desire, is to see Rassi ignominiously dismissed from office and banished. I insist, moreover, that Fabrice's case be reopened and tried before honest judges. If they bring him in innocent, as I trust and believe they will, it is no more than right that he should be made coadjutor to the Archbishop, with reversion of the office in the future. If my demands are not granted the Count and I shall leave the country, in which event I give Your Serene Highness this counsel: never to pardon Rassi and never to go outside the boundaries of your son's dominions. That dutiful son will do nothing to your serious detriment as long as you are near him."

"I have given all due attention to your statements," the Princess smilingly replied. "Is it expected of me that I furnish a mistress for my son?"

Digitized by Google

"By no means, madame; but try to make your salon amusing for him."

The conversation was prolonged on these and similar topics; the innocent and intelligent Princess was a wiser woman at its close.

One of the Duchess's couriers conveyed word to Fabrice that he was at liberty to enter the city, but to conduct himself discreetly. His friends saw little of him; he spent his days, disguised as a peasant, in the booth of a chestnut-vender opposite the gate of the citadel, under the trees of the mall.

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

XXIV

THE Duchess organized a series of delightful entertainments at the palace, whose walls had never beheld such gaieties. She had never been more charming than she was this winter, when living surrounded by great dangers; but as if in compensation she thought less often and less regretfully of the singular change in Fabrice. The young Prince always came early to the soirées of his mother, who regularly said to him:

"Go away and attend to the cares of government. I would n't be afraid to bet there are more than twenty reports on your desk this moment awaiting your yes or no. I don't want Europe to accuse me of making you an idle king that I may rule in your place."

This admonition, as luck would have it, always came at the most inopportune moment

Digitized by Google

possible—that is, when His Highness had overcome his timidity and assumed a part in the charades, a species of recreation to which he took very kindly. Twice a week there were country parties, to which, with the design of ingratiating the new sovereign with his subjects, the Princess invited the prettiest women of the middle classes. The Duchess hoped that the buxom bourgeoises, who were all envious at heart of the success of the bourgeois Rassi, would relate for the Prince's edification some of the Minister's exploits of gallantry among the fair ones of the populace, it being well known that the Prince, among other absurd notions, had set his heart on having a strictly moral cabinet.

Rassi had too much experience in such matters not to perceive that these brilliant entertainments, directed by his most dreaded enemy, were a standing menace to him. He had not seen fit to deliver to Count Mosca the copy of the sentence against Fabrice, therefore it was necessary that he or the Duchess should leave the court.

After the day of the popular rising, the existence of which it was now considered the correct thing to ignore, a fashion had sprung up of distributing money among the people.

Digitized by Google

This gave Rassi an idea. Dressed more shabbily even than usual, he climbed the stairs of the most wretched houses in the city and spent entire hours in conversation with their miserable tenants. He was well rewarded for his trouble: after two weeks' grubbing over his unsavory ground he unearthed the fact, of whose truth there was no room to doubt, that Ferrante Palla had been the secret leader of the insurrection; and, what was more, that the man, poor all his life, as befitted a great poet, had sent eight or ten diamonds to be sold at Genoa. Among others five perfect stones were mentioned which were worth all of forty thousand francs, and which, ten days previous to the Prince's death, had been sacrificed for thirty-five thousand, because, as the seller said, he needed money.

Great was the delight of the Minister of Justice at this discovery. He could not help noticing the scant deference that was accorded him at the court of the Princess Dowager, and more than once the Prince, with the unreflecting rudeness of youth, had laughed in his face while discussing business with him. It cannot be denied that Rassi's manners were excessively democratic; for

Digitized by Google

instance, he had a trick, whenever he was interested in a subject, of crossing his legs and nursing his right foot with his left hand; and as the interest grew he would take out his red cotton handkerchief and spread it on his lap. The Prince had a hearty laugh at the pleasantry of one of his mother's pretty bourgeoise guests, who, having a leg that she was not afraid of exhibiting in public, made bold to imitate this elegant posture of the Minister.

Rassi solicited a private audience and said to his master:

"Would Your Highness be willing to give a hundred thousand francs to know the exact manner of his august father's death? For that sum I think I can promise to unearth the criminals, if any such there be."

The Prince's answer was in correspondence with his wishes.

Not long after that Chékina apprised the Duchess that she had been offered a round sum on condition she would allow her mistress's diamonds to be inspected by a jeweler; she had rejected the proposition indignantly. The Duchess chided her for her action, and one week later Chékina had the stones ready for exhibition. On the day appointed

Digitized by Google

for the inspection Count Mosca detailed two experienced detectives to the shop of each of the jewelers of Parma, and about midnight came to the Duchess with the information that the inquisitive jeweler was none other than Rassi's brother. They were playing that evening at the palace a *commedia dell' arte*—that is to say, a skit in which each actor improvises the dialogue as he recites it, only the general scope of the piece having been previously given in the greenroom. The Duchess, who was in excellent spirits, had a rôle, her stage lover being Count Baldi, the quondam "friend" of the Marquise Raversi, who was among the spectators. The Prince, the most bashful man of his dominions, but a very good-looking young fellow, with a very inflammable heart under his jacket, had been studying Count Baldi's rôle, and wished to play it at the second representation.

"I have very little time to spare," said the Duchess to the Count; "I have to go on in the first scene of the second act. Let 's step into the hall of the guards."

There, surrounded by a score of young guardsmen, all on the alert and straining their ears to catch what the Prime Minister

Digitized by Google

and the Mistress of the Robes might have to say to each other, she said to her friend, with a light laugh:

"You are always scolding me for letting out my secrets uselessly. It was through me that Ernesto V ascended the throne; my object was to avenge Fabrice, whom I loved—innocently—a great deal better then than I do now. I know that you have your doubts about that innocence, but it does n't matter much, since with all my crimes you love me still. Well, here is a genuine out-and-out crime for you: I gave all my diamonds to a species of interesting lunatic named Ferrante Palla—I even embraced him—to induce him to kill the man who would have poisoned Fabrice. What was there wrong in that?"

"Ah, that is how Palla raised the money for his insurrection!" said the Count, dazed by the boldness of the communication. "And you can speak to me of such matters in a place like this!"

"I am on the anxious seat; Rassi is hot on the scent. It is true that I never suggested insurrection, for I detest the Jacobins. Think the matter over, and let me have your opinion when the play is ended."

"I will tell you at once that the best thing

Digitized by Google

for you to do is to inspire a passion in the Prince—but a Platonic passion, understand!"

Just then the call-boy came to summon the Duchess to the stage; she vanished.

A few days afterward the Duchess received through the mail a long and ill-constructed letter, signed with the name of a former maid of hers. The woman wanted employment at the court; but the Duchess had seen at the first glance that the letter was not in her handwriting. As she turned the sheet to read the second page there fell to the floor at her feet a little colored picture of the Virgin, folded in what was apparently a leaf torn from an old book. After glancing at the picture she turned to the printed paper that had enfolded it and read. What she read was this:

"The tribune took one hundred francs a month, and no more; the remainder was appropriated to relighting the sacred fire in hearts chilled by egotism. The old fox is on my trail; that is why I did not make one last attempt to see the object of my adoration. I said to myself, 'She does not love the Republic, she who is as superior to me in wisdom as she is in grace and beauty.' Be-

Digitized by Google

sides, how is one to make a republic without republicans? Have I been mistaken? Six months hence I shall be exploring, on foot and microscope in hand, the towns and cities of America. I mean to ascertain if it is right that I should continue to love the sole rival you have in my heart. If you receive this letter, Madame la Baronne, and if no profane eye shall have perused it previously, break a branch from one of the young ashes near the spot where I first had the audacity to speak to you. Then, beneath the great box-tree in the garden that you noticed once in happier days, I will bury a coffer in which you will find some trifles that bring reproach on men of my opinions. The fox is at my heels, but cannot reach the celestial being whom I adore; otherwise, assuredly, I should not have written. Look under the box-tree two weeks from now."

"So he has a printing-press at his disposal," said the Duchess. "In that case we shall have sonnets by the cord. The Lord knows all the names he will find for me!"

It occurred to her to employ a little coquetry and try what effect absence would produce. She was indisposed for a week and there was an end of the merry soirées. The

Digitized by Google

Princess, penitent for the measures which apprehensions on her son's behalf had obliged her to take in the early days of her widowhood, retired for those eight days to a convent attached to the church where the late Prince was buried. This interruption of the festivities had the effect of giving the Prince many unoccupied hours that he was at a loss what to do with, and at the same time inflicted a notable check on the influence of the Minister of Justice. Ernesto V saw the ennui that was in store for him should the Duchess abandon the court or withdraw her countenance from the revels there. The soirées were started again, and the Prince displayed more interest than ever in the comedies *dell' arte*. He cherished the ambition of assuming a rôle, but dared not avow it openly. One day, blushing furiously, he said to the Duchess, "Why may I not have a part as well as the others?"

"We are all Your Highness's very obedient subjects. If Your Highness will honor me by giving me the command I will arrange a piece in which you and I shall always be on the stage together; and as the best of actors are subject to stage-fright now and then, if you will watch me closely I will intimate to

Digitized by Google

you the appropriate replies to make." So said, so done; the details were arranged with infinite tact and skill. The timid Prince was ashamed of his timidity; the pains the Duchess took to protect his self-esteem made a deep impression on the young sovereign.

On the night of his first appearance the play began half an hour earlier than usual, and when it came time for the company to pass into the theater there were in the salon only eight or ten elderly women. Those respectable old bodies were not calculated to scare the Prince very badly, and, moreover, having been brought up at Munich in strict monarchical principles, they applauded him to the echo. Using the authority vested in her by her position, the Duchess gave orders to close and lock the door by which the mob of courtiers gained access to the theater. The Prince, who was quick of apprehension and had a handsome face, got through the first scenes successfully. He repeated with much intelligence the phrases which he read in the Duchess's eyes or that she suggested to him in a stage-whisper. Selecting a moment when the few spectators were applauding with might and main, the Duchess gave a signal; the great door flew back on

Digitized by Google

its hinges, and in a trice the hall was filled with all the pretty women of the court, who, seeing the Prince's charming face and radiant air, began to clap their little hands. The Prince blushed with delight. The part he was playing was that of the Duchess's lover. Presently, instead of having to suggest to him what he was to say, she found it necessary to urge him to be more brief. He discoursed on love with an enthusiasm that embarrassed the actress; his rhapsodies lasted five minutes.

The Duchess no longer possessed that dazzling beauty that had distinguished her the year before. Fabrice's confinement, and to a still greater extent her sojourn on Lake Maggiore in company with the young man in his morose and silent mood, had added ten years to the fair Gina's age. Her features were more strongly marked; what they had gained in intellectuality they had lost in youthfulness. They had not the sportive grace of her earlier days, but on the stage, with the assistance of cosmetics and the various devices known to actresses, she was still by far the handsomest woman of the court.

The passion with which the Prince delivered his tirades did not escape the notice

Digitized by Google

of the courtiers; they whispered to one another, "Behold the Balbi of the coming reign." The Count's mind was ill at ease. When the piece came to an end the Duchess said to the Prince in presence of the company:

"Your Highness identifies himself with his part too closely. People will say that you are in love with a woman of thirty-eight, and that will be the ruin of my friendship with the Count. Therefore I shall feel constrained to refuse to act with Your Highness in the future unless you will give me your princely word to address me only as you would a woman of a certain age—the Marquise Raversi, for instance."

The piece was repeated three times in succession. The Prince was wild with delight; but one evening he appeared preoccupied.

"Either I am greatly mistaken," said the Mistress of the Robes to the Princess, "or Rassi is meditating mischief. Let Your Highness command a play for to-morrow evening. The Prince will act badly, and in his chagrin will tell us something of what is happening."

The Prince did act badly; he mumbled his words so they were scarcely audible, and

Digitized by Google

seemed unable to complete his sentences. At the end of the first act he was almost crying. The Duchess stood near him, but was impassive and cold as a stone. When at last he and she were left alone together in the greenroom for an instant he crossed over and shut the door.

"I can't go on," he said; "I shall never get through the second act. I *won't* consent to be applauded out of courtesy. The applause I received to-night almost broke my heart. Tell me, what shall I do?"

"I will go before the curtain, drop a deep courtesy to Her Highness and another to the audience, and, just as if I were a stage-manager born and bred, announce that, owing to the sudden indisposition of the gentleman who had the part of Lelio, the entertainment will now conclude with a little music. Count Rusca and the little Ghisolfi girl will be only too delighted to raise their slender, squeaking voices before such a brilliant audience."

He took her hand and kissed it rapturously.

"Oh that you were a man!" he said. "You might assist me with your counsel. Rassi has just laid on my desk one hundred and eighty-two depositions against the

Digitized by Google

alleged murderers of my father. In addition to the depositions there is an indictment two hundred pages long. I am expected to read all the papers, and, what 's more, I have promised to say nothing to the Count. I shall be hounded on to countless cruel reprisals; even now he is urging me to apply to the French government for the extradition of Ferrante Palla, the great poet, for whom I have so real an admiration. He is living near Antibes, under the name of Poncet."

"Rassi would like nothing better than that you should hang a Liberal or two; for the minute you do so he knows that his position is secure to him for life. But it will no longer answer for Your Highness to wear your heart upon your sleeve. I shall say nothing either to the Princess or the Count of the trouble you are in; but as my oath compels me to have no secrets from the Princess, I shall be glad if Your Highness will tell his mother those things that he has just told me."

The mortification of the unsuccessful actor was lost for a moment in the anxieties of the sovereign.

"Very well. Go and inform my mother that I will wait on her in her study."

Digitized by Google

The Prince left the greenroom and crossed the salon that served as a foyer to the theater, roughly dismissing the chamberlain and aide-de-camp in attendance. The Princess hurried from her box. On reaching the study the Mistress of the Robes saluted mother and son with a profound reverence and left them to themselves. As may be imagined, the court was instantly in a ferment. Such events as the present keep life from becoming stagnant there. At the expiration of an hour the Prince appeared at the door of the study and summoned the Duchess. The Princess was in tears; her son's countenance was very gloomy.

"Here are two persons who are out of sorts," said the Duchess to herself, "and would like to find a pretext for venting their anger on some one." At first mother and son took the words out of each other's mouth in their eagerness to state their case to the Mistress of the Robes, who was careful in her replies to commit herself to no definite policy. For two mortal hours the discussion continued on these lines, each of the three actors in the tiresome scene sticking to the rôle he had assumed originally. The Prince went in person to fetch the two huge

Digitized by Google

portfolios that Rassi had left on his desk. On emerging from his mother's study he found the whole court lying in ambush for him in the corridor. "Get you gone; leave me in peace!" he shouted, in a tone of rudeness such as had never been heard from him before. He did not wish to be seen carrying the two portfolios; a prince is not supposed to carry burdens. The courtiers vanished with celerity. On his way back there was not a soul to be seen save the lackeys putting out the lights. He packed them off in no gentlè language, as he did the aide-de-camp on duty, poor Fontana, who had lingered through excess of zeal.

"Every one seems determined to do all he can to try my patience to-night," he peevishly said to the Duchess on his return to the consultation-room. He gave her credit for great cleverness, and was furious at her evident resolve not to speak her mind. She, for her part, was fixed in her determination to say nothing until her advice had been asked in so many words. Another half-hour passed before the Prince, who was standing on his dignity, finally brought himself to observe, "But how is it, madame—you say nothing!"

"My duty is to serve the Princess, and

Digitized by Google

forget the words that may be spoken in my hearing."

"Well, madame," said the Prince, blushing painfully, "I command you to state your opinion."

"The object of punishing crime is to prevent its repetition. Did the late Prince die by poison? It is extremely doubtful. Was he poisoned by the Jacobins? That is what Rassi would like to prove; for when he does he at once becomes Your Highness's necessary and inseparable tool for all time. In that event Your Highness, now at the beginning of his reign, may look forward to many evenings like the present. Your subjects generally say, and it is a fact that there is no denying, that Your Highness has a tender heart. You will continue to enjoy that reputation until you shall have hanged a Liberal, and you need not fear that any one will prepare a dose of poison for you."

"It is plain what your conclusion is," the Princess angrily exclaimed. "You do not wish that my husband's murderers should be punished."

"I suppose madame will accuse me next of being their confederate."

The Duchess read in the Prince's eyes

Digitized by Google

that he believed she and his mother were in accord to dictate a plan of conduct to him. There was a swift exchange of acrimonious repartee between the two women, at the end of which the Duchess declared she would not say another word, and was faithful to her resolution; but the Prince, after a long argument with his mother, again demanded an expression of opinion from her.

"That is what I assure Your Highness I am determined not to give!"

"Come, come, this is mere childish trifling!" exclaimed the Prince.

"I beg you to speak, madame," the Princess stiffly said.

"I entreat to be excused, madame.—But Your Highness," the Duchess added, turning to the Prince, "reads French excellently; will you not spread oil upon the troubled waters by reading *us* one of La Fontaine's fables?"

The *us* struck the Princess as slightly impertinent; however, she merely looked surprised and amused when the Mistress of the Robes, who had marched up to the bookcase with perfect unconcern, returned with a volume of the *Fables*. She turned over the leaves for a moment, then handed the book

Digitized by Google

to the Prince with the remark, "I beg Your Highness will read the *entire* fable."

"THE GARDENER AND HIS LORD.*

"A lover of gardens, half cit and half clown,
Possessed a nice garden beside a small town;
And with it a field by a live hedge inclosed,
Where sorrel and lettuce, at random disposed,
A little of jasmine and much of wild thyme,
Grew gaily and all in their prime
To make up Miss Peggy's bouquet,
The grace of her bright wedding-day.
For poaching in such a nice field — 't was a shame;
A foraging, cud-chewing hare was to blame.
Whereof the good owner bore down
This tale to the lord of the town:
'Some mischievous animal, morning and night,
In spite of my caution, comes in for his bite.
He laughs at my cunning-set deadfalls and snares,
For clubbing and stoning as little he cares.
I think him a wizard.' 'A wizard, the coot!
I 'll catch him if he were a devil to boot!'
The lord said, in haste to have sport for his hounds.
'I 'll clear him, I promise you, out of your grounds;
To-morrow I 'll do it, without any fail.'
The thing thus agreed on, all hearty and hale,
The lord and his party, at crack of the dawn,
With hounds at their heels, cantered over the lawn.
Arrived, said the lord, in his jovial mood,
'We 'll breakfast with you if your chickens are good.'

* The translator has borrowed this version from Elizur Wright's translation of La Fontaine's work.

Digitized by Google

. . . .

To breakfast the huddle of hunters succeeds,
The yelping of dogs and the neighing of steeds,
All cheering and fixing for wonderful deeds.
The horns and the bugles make thundering din;
Much wonders our gardener what it can mean.
The worst is, his garden most wofully fares:
Adieu to its arbors and borders and squares;
Adieu to its succory, onions, and leeks;
Adieu to whatever good cookery seeks.

. . . . . .

Scarce suffered the gard'ner his patience to wince,
Consoling himself—'t was the sport of a prince;
While bipeds and quadrupeds served to devour,
And trample, and waste, in the space of an hour,
Far more than a nation of foraging hares
Could possibly do in a hundred of years.
Small princes, this story is true
When told in relation to you.
In settling your quarrels with kings for your tools,
You prove yourselves losers and eminent fools."

A long silence ensued upon the completion of the reading. The Prince walked up and down the room, having first restored the book to its place upon the shelf.

"Well, madame," said the Princess, "now will you condescend to speak?"

"Certainly not, madame! not until His Highness shall have made me a minister. It would be endangering my position as Mistress of the Robes should I speak here."

Digitized by Google

There was another silence that lasted fully a quarter of an hour; it gave the Princess time to reflect on what befell Marie de Médicis, mother of Louis XIII. For some days past, by the Duchess's direction, the reader to Her Highness had been entertaining the two ladies with Bazin's excellent *History of Louis Treize.* The Princess, although deeply offended, considered it not improbable that the Duchess might leave the country, in which event Rassi, of whom she was horribly afraid, might follow the example set by Richelieu and persuade her son to banish her. The Princess would have given all she possessed in the world just then for a chance to humiliate her Mistress of the Robes, but there was no opening. She rose, and with a forced smile came over to the Duchess, saying:

"Come, madame, speak, and prove to me that you love me."

"Well, then, two words, and that will be all. I say, burn in the fireplace yonder all the papers collected by that viper Rassi, and never let him know what became of them."

She added in a familiar whisper in the Princess's ear:

Digitized by Google

"Rassi may turn out to be another Richelieu!"

"But the devil! those papers have cost me upward of eighty thousand francs!" the Prince angrily exclaimed.

"Prince," the Duchess energetically replied, "that is the price one has to pay for employing low-born knaves. Would to heaven you might lose a million, if it were to be the means of closing your ear to the infamous scoundrels who did not allow your father a night's repose during the last six years of his reign!"

The word "low-born" sounded particularly agreeable in the Princess's ears, who had always thought that the Count and his Egeria attached an undue value to intelligence, which appeared to her a sort of first cousin to Jacobinism.

During the brief moment of profound silence occupied by the Princess's reflections the clock in the palace court struck three. Clara-Paolina rose and made a deep reverence to her son: "My health will not permit me to protract the discussion longer. Have no low-born minister about you; you will never convince me that Rassi did not steal half the money that he claims to have spent

Digitized by Google

on his spies and eavesdroppers." She took two candles from their sconces and placed them erect in the empty fireplace in such a manner that they should not be extinguished; then, approaching her son, she added, "The just desire of avenging a husband's death has yielded in my mind to the cogent reasoning of the fable. My son, will you permit me to burn those documents?" The Prince remained silent and motionless.

"His face has no more expression than a barber's block," said the Duchess to herself. "The Count is right; the old Prince would not have compelled us to sit up until three o'clock in the morning waiting for him to make up his mind."

The Princess, who had remained standing, added:

"That little pettifogger would be elated could he know that the two greatest persons of the country have been kept out of their beds all night on account of his wicked depositions, full of lies and calumnies, and manufactured solely with a view to his own advancement."

The Prince bounded like a madman on one of the portfolios and emptied its contents in the fireplace. The mass of papers was near

Digitized by Google

smothering the flame of the two candles; the apartment was filled with smoke. He glanced at a carafe that stood on a table. His mother intercepted the look and saw that he was tempted to save the documents that had cost him eighty thousand francs.

"Open the window!" she cried sharply to the Duchess. The latter made haste to obey. Immediately the papers blazed up all together; there was a great roaring in the chimney, which it was pretty quickly evident had caught fire.

The Prince was not great-minded where money matters were concerned. His imagination depicted his palace in ashes and all the wealth it contained annihilated. He ran to the window and summoned the guard in tones that were far from steady. Having seen the soldiers come tumbling out into the courtyard in response to his call, he returned to the fireplace, which was now sucking up the air from the open window with a really terrific noise. He stamped, swore, rushed two or three times around the room like one possessed, and finally made his exit on a run.

The Princess and her attendant remained, standing in the middle of the room and eyeing each other silently.

Digitized by Google

"Will the storm burst again, I wonder?" said the Duchess to herself. "Faith, it looks as if I had won my case." And she was considering how she might best manifest her independence when a sudden thought flashed across her mind; there was the second portfolio, safe and sound! "No, my case is only half won." She said to the Princess, in an offhand tone:

"Is it madame's desire that I burn the remainder of those papers?"

"Where will you burn them?" the Princess petulantly asked.

"In the fireplace of the drawing-room; there will be no danger if I throw them in one at a time."

The Duchess placed the portfolio, filled to bursting with papers, under her arm, took a candle, and passed into the adjoining salon. She took the time to make sure that the portfolio was the one which contained the depositions, concealed five or six bundles of the documents under her shawl, carefully burned the remainder, and disappeared without taking leave of the Princess.

"There 's an impertinence that she can hardly fail to notice," she said to herself, with a little laugh. "But why did she want

Digitized by Google

to put me in danger of losing my head on the gallows, with her silly airs of an inconsolable widow?"

Great was the wrath of the Princess against her Mistress of the Robes as she heard the sound of the receding carriage-wheels.

Notwithstanding the lateness of the hour the Duchess sent a messenger for the Count. He had been witnessing the fire at the château, but made his appearance presently with the news that it was extinguished. "The little Prince really behaved with much courage, and I complimented him heartily."

"Look over these depositions, and then we 'll burn them."

The Count's face grew pale as he read the papers.

"Faith, they are not far off the truth; the investigation has been conducted most adroitly. They seem to have Ferrante Palla in a tight place, and if he blabs our position won't be an enviable one."

"But he won't blab," cried the Duchess; "he is a man of honor. Come, give me the papers and let me burn them."

"Not yet. Let me take down the names of a few dangerous witnesses, that I shall be

Digitized by Google

under the necessity of putting out of the way if Rassi attempts to make mischief again."

"Your Excellency will remember that the Prince has given his word to say nothing to his Minister of Justice of to-night's occurrences."

"Yes, and he will keep it, from pusillanimity and dread of a scene."

"And now, dear friend, I will say to you that the events of this night have greatly improved the prospects of our marriage. I should not have liked to bring you a criminal trial for my dowry, especially for an offense committed in the interest of another person."

The devoted lover took his mistress's hand and thanked her gratefully, while tears stood in his eyes.

"Before you go tell me how I am to behave toward the Princess. I am ready to drop with fatigue; I have been acting six hours—one on the stage and five in the closet."

"The manner of your departure was sufficient retaliation for the Princess's ill-natured remarks, which were only the result of weakness. Be the same toward her to-morrow that you were this morning. Rassi is not in

Digitized by Google

prison or banished yet; Fabrice's sentence is still in existence.

"You *demanded* a decision from the Princess, which is a pretty certain method of ruffling the temper of potentates, and even of prime ministers. Then, too, you are her Mistress of the Robes—that is to say, her dependent. Owing to the tergiversation that we must look for in the weak-minded, in three days Rassi will stand higher in favor than ever. He will try to have some one hanged. So long as he has not succeeded in committing the Prince he is sure of nothing.

"There was a man hurt at the fire last night, a little tailor, who showed remarkable bravery. To-morrow I mean to invite the Prince to go for a walk with me, and we will visit the man. I shall be well armed and will keep my eyes open; besides, the young Prince is not yet hated by his subjects. I wish to accustom him to walk about the city; it will be a trick scored on Rassi, who will certainly succeed me, and will never venture to countenance such an imprudence. On our return from the tailor's I will conduct the Prince past his father's statue. He will notice the damage done by the stones of the mob to the Roman petticoat in which the

Digitized by Google

genius of the sculptor saw fit to drape His ex-Highness, and the Prince will be less intelligent than I give him credit for if he does n't make this remark: 'That 's what one gains by hanging Jacobins.' To which I will reply, 'If you are going to hang them, hang ten thousand or don't hang one. St. Bartholomew's night was the death of Protestantism in France.'

"To-morrow, my dear, before I go for my walk, send up your card to the Prince, and when admitted say to him, 'Last night I served Your Highness in the capacity of minister. I gave you advice, and in obeying your commands incurred the displeasure of the Princess. Now I want my pay.' He will expect you are about to make a demand for money, and will frown; you will let him meditate for a while on the disagreeable prospect of putting his hand in his pocket, then will say, 'I beg Your Highness to issue a decree that Fabrice be tried *contradictorily*' (which means in his presence) 'by the twelve most respectable judges of your dominions.' And, striking while the iron is hot, you will present to him for his signature a little ordinance written by your own fair hand, and which I will dictate to you. It is unnecessary

Digitized by Google

to say that it will contain a clause annulling the first sentence. There is one objection, but if you press him hard the Prince won't have time to think of it. He may say to you, 'Fabrice must give himself up and return to his confinement in the citadel.' To which you will reply, 'He will surrender himself at the city prison' (which, you know, is under my control. Your nephew will be able to come and see you every evening). If the Prince makes answer, 'No, it is a matter that concerns the honor of the citadel, and I desire that he be returned to his old cell,' your reply should be, 'No, for there he will be at the mercy of Rassi, my bitter enemy.' And you will give him to understand, by one of those ingenious hints that you women are so expert in conveying, that, in order to influence Rassi, you may inform him of last night's *auto da fe.* If he remains obdurate you must intimate to him that you are going for a two weeks' visit to your château at Sacca.

"Send for Fabrice and consult him on these measures which may result in landing him in a jail. To contemplate all eventualities, if, while he is behind the bars, Rassi in his impatience administers poison to me, Fabrice

Digitized by Google

may be in serious danger. But there is not much probability of that. You know that I have engaged a French cook, a jolly fellow and a punster; and a man who makes puns is never a murderer. I have informed our Fabrice that I have discovered all the witnesses of his praiseworthy and courageous action. It was evidently Giletti's intention to assassinate him. I did not speak to you about having found the witnesses because I wished to give you a surprise; but the plan miscarried; the Prince would not sign. I told Fabrice that I would certainly procure ecclesiastical preferment for him; but there will be difficulties in the way if our enemies have it in their power to object to the court of Rome that there is an indictment for murder hanging over him.

"Don't you see, madame, that unless he is tried openly and fairly the name Giletti will always remain an obstacle to his success in life? It would be the height of pusillanimity to refuse to be tried when one is sure of being brought in innocent. Besides, even if he were guilty, I could manage his acquittal. When I spoke to him the hot-blooded young man would n't let me finish. He took down the official almanac, and we selected in con-

Digitized by Google

cert the twelve most learned and upright judges. From the list thus made we struck off six names and replaced them by six jurists, my personal enemies; and as the enmity of only two of these was certain, we completed the schedule with four of Rassi's rascally henchmen."

This proposition of the Count not unreasonably inspired the Duchess with a mortal terror; however, she was finally induced to listen to reason, and wrote out at the Count's dictation the ordinance naming the judges.

It was six o'clock in the morning when the Count left her. She tried to get a little sleep, but in vain. At nine o'clock she breakfasted in company with Fabrice, whom she found more than willing to be tried; at ten she presented herself at the apartment of the Princess, who was not visible; at eleven she saw the Prince, who was holding his levee, and signed the ordinance without the least objection. The Duchess sent the paper to the Count and went to bed.

It would be an agreeable task to describe Rassi's rage when, in the presence of the Prince, the Count forced him to countersign the decree that had received the sovereign's

Digitized by Google

signature that morning; but we must hasten on to other events.

The Count discussed the suitability of the judges, one by one, and offered to change the names. But perhaps the reader is beginning to tire a little of all these details of procedure, as well as of all the intrigues of the court. The moral to be deduced from it all is, Let no man who is happy go near a court unless he wishes to see his happiness take wings and vanish, and make his future dependent on the caprice of an intriguing lady's-maid. In America, on the other hand, the great Republic, one must spend all his waking moments in currying favor with shopkeepers and grimy mechanics, and become as crass and thick-skinned as they; and there one has not the solace of the opera.

At the Duchess's reception that evening her anxiety destroyed all her pleasure: Fabrice was nowhere to be found. At last, along about midnight, while she was acting in the comedy at the palace, she received a letter from him. Instead of surrendering himself at the city prison, which was under the Count's jurisdiction, he had gone and taken possession of his old cell in the citadel, only too happy to breathe the same air as Clelia.

Digitized by Google

It was a circumstance that might have material consequences; the danger of his being poisoned was more than ever to be apprehended. The young man's folly reduced the Duchess to despair. She could forgive the cause, his unreasoning love for Clelia, because it was definitely settled that a few days would see her the wife of the millionaire Marquis Crescenzi. The mad prank restored Fabrice to his old position in the Duchess's heart.

"That confounded paper that I went and got the Prince to sign will be the cause of his death! What fools men are with their notions of honor! As if it were worth while even to think of honor under an absolute government, in a country where a Rassi is minister of justice! Our right course would have been to accept the pardon which the Prince would have signed as readily as that order for a special tribunal. What does it matter, after all, that a man of Fabrice's birth should remain under indictment, proven or not proven, for having killed in open conflict an actor of that Giletti's stripe!"

Immediately on receipt of Fabrice's note the Duchess hurried off to the Count, whom she found in a state of violent agitation.

Digitized by Google

"Ah, my dear friend, I am terribly unlucky in my attempts to serve that boy, and you will have further occasion to reproach me. I can prove to you that I sent last night for the keeper of the city prison to give him his instructions. Your nephew would have come to drink tea with you every evening. The horrible part of it is that neither you nor I can go to the Prince and tell him that we fear poison—poison administered by Rassi. He would say that such suspicion argued deep depravity on our part. Still, if you insist, I will go to the palace; but I know what answer I shall get. Nay, I will say more; I will do for you what I would not do for myself. Since I came into office in this country I have not been responsible for the death of a single man; and often in the twilight I think remorsefully of those two spies whom I rather inconsiderately ordered shot when I had a command in Spain. Well, do you wish me to relieve you of Rassi's presence? He is a continual menace to Fabrice's safety, for, Fabrice dead, he knows that I shall not remain in Parma."

The proposition pleased the Duchess hugely, but she did not give it her assent.

Digitized by Google

"I don't wish," she said, "that in our peaceful retreat under the starry sky of Naples your evenings should be troubled by dark memories."

"But, dear friend, it appears to me that we are only to be allowed a choice of our dark memories. How will it be with you, how will it be with me, should Fabrice be carried off by illness?"

The discussion was long continued on this theme; the Duchess ended it by saying:

"I love you better than I love Fabrice, and to that circumstance Rassi owes his life. No, I will not consent that the shadow of a crime shall darken all the evenings of the old age that we shall spend together."

She hurried away to the fortress, where General Fabio Conti was enabled to gratify his spite by showing her that clause of the military regulations which says that no person shall be allowed to enter a state prison unless on an order signed by the Prince.

"But the Marquis Crescenzi and his fiddlers come here every day."

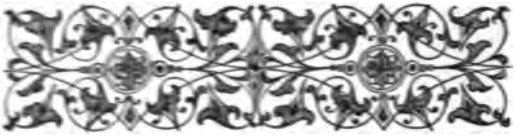
"I have obtained an order for them from His Highness."

The poor Duchess did not know all the mischief that was impending. General Conti

Digitized by Google

had regarded Fabrice's flight as a personal affront. When the young man presented himself at the office of the citadel to give himself up he should not have received him, for he had no authority for doing so. "But it is Providence that sends him back to me," he said to himself, "to repair my honor and efface the stain that otherwise would rest on my military career. It won't do to let the opportunity slip. There is no doubt of his acquittal, and I have but a few days in which to carry out my plans of vengeance."

Digitized by Google



XXV

OUR hero's presence in the citadel was a source of deep suffering and grief to Clelia. The poor girl, always sincere and truthful with herself, could not shut her eyes to the fact that there would be no joy for her in life while parted from Fabrice; but she had made a vow to the Madonna, at the time of her father's illness, to sacrifice all to filial duty by marrying the Marquis Crescenzi. She had vowed never to look on Fabrice again, and had long been suffering the acutest remorse for the avowal into which she had been betrayed in the letter which she wrote to him on the eve of his flight. Who shall describe what passed in that sorrowing heart when, while watching the joyous antics of her birds, ever and anon raising her eyes for a timid and tender

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

glance at that window whence Fabrice had so many a time looked out on her, she beheld him in the flesh, standing there and saluting her with affectionate respect!

She thought it was a vision sent by Heaven for her chastisement; then the truth appeared to her in all its naked cruelty. "They have recaptured him," she said to herself, "and he is lost!" She recalled the opinions that had been expressed in the fortress immediately after his flight; the lowest turnkey considered he had suffered a mortal insult. Clelia looked at Fabrice, and in spite of herself her look conveyed to him the whole story of the passion that was her despair. "Do you think," it seemed to say to him, "that I shall know happiness in that splendid palace they are making ready for me? My father keeps dinning it in my ears that you are as poor as we; but great heavens! how blessed I should be could I share that poverty! But ah, woe is me, we are never to see each other more!"

She would have used the alphabets, but had not the strength. A feeling of faintness came over her while contemplating Fabrice, and she sank upon a chair beside the window. Her head rested on the sill; her

Digitized by Google

beautiful face, full of longing and tender pity, was exposed to the young man's ardent gaze. When she opened her eyes again after a few moments her first glance was for Fabrice. She saw tears standing in his eyes, but they were tears of happiness; he saw that though absent he had not been forgotten. The two poor young folks remained for a while gazing on each other as if under the influence of a spell. Finally Fabrice began to sing some words that he improvised, and the burden of which was: "I returned to my prison that I might see you once more. I am to have another trial."

The words seemed to awaken Clelia's slumbering resolution. She rose, pressed her hands to her eyes, and by pantomime endeavored to express that she must not look on him longer; in a moment of forgetfulness she had broken the vow made to the Madonna. On Fabrice venturing to speak of his love again she turned and fled in indignation, mentally repeating her oath never to see him more, for such were the precise terms of her vow to the Virgin. "*My eyes shall never look on him again.*" She had written the words on a bit of paper that her Uncle Cesare had allowed her to burn on the

Digitized by Google

altar at the moment of the offering, while he was saying mass.

But, notwithstanding all her vows, now that Fabrice was again an inmate of the citadel Clelia resumed her former habits and ways of life. She had been accustomed to pass her days alone in the privacy of her chamber. As soon as she had recovered from the agitation into which Fabrice's unexpected return had cast her, she was seen more frequently about the palace, and began to renew acquaintance with her humble friends. An old woman, a great gossip, employed in the kitchen, said to her one day, with a mysterious air, "Signor Fabrice won't get away from the citadel so easily this time."

"The next time he won't have to lower himself down the wall," said Clelia; "he will walk out at the door if he is acquitted."

"I tell Your Excellency that the next time he leaves the citadel it will be feet foremost."

A deadly pallor overspread Clelia's face, which the old woman noticed and held her tongue. She had been guilty of an indiscretion, she told herself, in divulging such things to the Governor's daughter, who would be expected to help circulate the report that Fabrice had been carried off by illness. On her

Digitized by Google

way back to her room Clelia encountered the prison doctor, a timid, well-meaning sort of man, who told her with a frightened air that Fabrice was very sick. She was scarcely able to sustain herself. She hurried off in quest of her uncle, the good Abbé Don Cesare, and finally found him on his knees in the chapel, praying fervently. The bell rang for dinner. All during the repast not a word was exchanged between the two men; but as they were about to leave the table the General addressed his brother with words of stinging reproach. The latter looked at the servants, who retired from the room.

"General," said Don Cesare, "I have the honor to advise you of my approaching departure from the citadel; I intend to resign my position."

"*Bravo! bravissimo!* to increase my difficulties! And your reason, may it please you?"

"My conscience."

"Bah, you are only a sniveling priest! You have no sense of honor!"

"Fabrice is dead," said Clelia to herself. "They have given him poison in his dinner, or will to-morrow." She flew to the aviary, intending to communicate with the prisoner

Digitized by Google

by singing to the accompaniment of her piano. "I will make confession of my fault," she thought, "and perhaps the violation of my oath will be forgiven me in consideration of saving a human life." Imagine her consternation when, on reaching the aviary, she saw that the shutters had been replaced by heavy planks affixed to the iron bars! In her distress and despair she endeavored to attract the captive's attention by some words that were rather shrieked than sung. There was no answering voice; a silence as of death reigned in the Farnèse Tower. "All is over," she said to herself. She ran downstairs like one beside herself, then flew back again to secure the trifling sum of money she possessed and a pair of little diamond earrings. She also gathered up in passing the bread that remained over from the dinner, which had been deposited on the sideboard. "If he be still alive my duty is to save him." She advanced with a resolute air toward the postern of the tower. The door was open; a guard of eight men had just been stationed in the Hall of the Columns in the basement. She looked at the soldiers without flinching. She had expected to speak with the sergeant in command, but

Digitized by Google

he was not there. She darted up the narrow spiral staircase which, winding around one of the pillars, led to the floor above. The soldiers looked at her stupidly, but did not interfere to prevent her movement, probably from respect for her handsome bonnet and fine lace shawl. On the first floor there was no one to be seen, but on reaching the second, at the entrance of the corridor which, as the reader may remember, had in it three doors composed of heavy iron bars and conducted to Fabrice's chamber, she met a strange turnkey, who said to her, with a startled air:

"He has not eaten his dinner yet."

"I know it," Clelia replied. The man made no attempt to stop her. Twenty steps farther on, seated on the lowest of the six wooden steps that led to Fabrice's cell, she encountered another turnkey, an elderly man with a very red face, who in a bold voice asked her:

"Mademoiselle, have you a pass from the Governor?"

"Do you not know who I am?"

Clelia at that moment was endowed with superhuman force; she was as one beside herself. "I am on the way to save my husband," she said to herself.

Digitized by Google

While the old turnkey was mumbling, "My duty won't permit—" Clelia had sprung rapidly up the six steps. She threw herself against the door. A huge key was in the lock; it needed all her strength to turn it. At that moment the half-drunken turnkey laid hold of the bottom of her skirt. She darted into the room, leaving a portion of her gown in the hands of the old vagabond as she slammed the door behind her; and as the turnkey was pushing at it to effect an entrance after her, shot home a bolt that her hand lighted on by chance. She looked about the cell and saw Fabrice seated at a small table on which was his dinner. She bounded to the table, overturned it, and clutching the young man by the arm, exclaimed:

"Hast thou eaten?"

Fabrice was enraptured by that *thou*. For the first time poor Clelia, in her trouble, had forgotten feminine decorum and openly shown her love.

Fabrice was about commencing his fatal meal. He took her in his arms and covered her with kisses. "The dinner is poisoned," he thought; "but if I tell Clelia I have not touched it her religious scruples will assert

Digitized by Google

themselves and she will fly from me. If, on the other hand, she thinks I am dying, I can prevail on her to stay. She would be glad to have an excuse for breaking off her odious marriage; chance presents us with one. The jailers will come flocking here, they will break down the door, and the result will be a scandal of such proportions that the Marquis Crescenzi may take alarm and withdraw from the proposed alliance."

During the instant of silence occupied by these reflections Fabrice perceived that Clelia was already making an effort to release herself from his embrace.

"I do not feel the pains as yet," he said, "but soon they will lay me at your feet. Help me to die."

"O my only friend on earth!" she cried, "I will die with you." She clasped him convulsively in her arms.

She was so beautiful, in her light attire, in that moment of passionate abandon, that Fabrice was unable to resist an impulse that could hardly be called voluntary. There was no resistance offered.

In the outburst of passion and generosity that follows close upon a great happiness he thoughtlessly said to her:

Digitized by Google

"The first moments of our bliss should not be sullied by a despicable falsehood. But for your bravery I should be a corpse, or else should be writhing in frightful agony; but I was about to commence my dinner when you appeared, and had not tasted the dishes."

Many horrible images Fabrice called up and dilated on in order to dispel the indignation that he saw gathering in Clelia's eyes. She looked at him earnestly for a time, distracted between two violent and conflicting emotions, then threw herself into his arms. A great tumult was heard in the corridor without, the clash of the iron doors opening and shutting, the sound of voices raised in loud dispute.

"Ah, if I but had my arms!" cried Fabrice. "They took them from me before they would grant me admission here. Doubtless they are coming to dispose of me. Adieu, my Clelia; I bless my death, since it has brought me happiness." Clelia embraced him and gave him a small ivory-handled poniard, the blade of which was about as long as that of a penknife.

"Don't let them kill you," she said to him; "defend yourself to the last. If my uncle the

Digitized by Google

Abbé hears the noise he will save you; he is as brave as he is good. I will go and speak to them." And with these words she hurried toward the door.

"If you escape their daggers," she said excitedly, looking back over her shoulder, and with her hand on the bolt of the door, "starve rather than touch the food they give you. Keep the bread I brought you always on your person." The noises seemed to be drawing nearer. Fabrice seized the young girl about the waist and flung her to one side, then, throwing the door wide open, rushed down the short flight of six steps. He had the little ivory-handled poniard in his hand, and with it had nearly inflicted serious damage on the waistcoat of General Fontana, the Prince's aide-de-camp, who stepped quickly back with a frightened face, exclaiming, "Why, Monsignor del Dongo, I came here to do you a kindness!"

Fabrice sprang up the six steps and shouted into the chamber, "Fontana is here to serve me;" after which, returning to the General, he apologized at length for his inconsiderate action. "There was an attempt made to poison me; the dinner that you see there on the floor has poison in it. Some-

Digitized by Google

thing warned me not to touch it; but I must say in all candor that such a proceeding is offensive to me. When I heard you coming I thought it was the *buli* sent to despatch me with their daggers. General, I charge you to take measures that no one be allowed to enter this room. They would remove the poison, and it is right that our good Prince should have every opportunity of investigating the case."

The General, pale and greatly shocked, gave the desired orders to some of his escort, while the prison officials, with hangdog, sulky looks, scurried away downstairs. They took the advance, ostensibly not to block the narrow corridor for the General and his suite, but really that they might save their bacon and disperse as quickly as possible. Much to General Fontana's surprise, Fabrice lingered for a full quarter of an hour on the little spiral staircase that conducted to the basement. His object was to give Clelia time to hide in one of the first-floor rooms.

It was the Duchess who, after many fruitless efforts, at last succeeded in having General Fontana despatched to the citadel. Her success was due to chance. On leaving Count Mosca, whose alarm was no less than

Digitized by Google

hers, she had hastened to the palace. The Princess, who had a holy horror of anything approaching energy of action, considering it vulgar, told her she was foolish, and did not appear the least disposed to put herself out to serve her. The Duchess, in her anguish, was weeping scalding tears; all she was capable of was to repeat at frequent intervals:

"But, madame, in half an hour Fabrice will be dead—poisoned."

Beholding the cold-blooded unconcern of the Princess, the Duchess was almost frantic with distress. That moral reflection did not occur to her which would not have escaped a woman educated in one of the religions of the North, which do not preclude personal examination: "He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword"—substituting "poison" for the word "sword." Reflections of that kind in Italy appear paltry and conventional in moments of passion, as a pun would do at Paris under similar circumstances.

In her forlorn state the Duchess on the chance entered the room occupied by the Marquis Crescenzi, whose tour of duty it was that day. On her return to Parma the Marquis had been profuse with his thanks for

Digitized by Google

the post of *chevalier d'honneur*, which but for her he could never have hoped to obtain. Offers of service and protestations of lifelong devotion had not been wanting on his part. The Duchess approached him with these words:

"Rassi is about to poison Fabrice, who is in the citadel. I will bring some chocolate and a bottle of wine, which you will put in your pocket. Go up to the citadel, and if you think you have any cause to be grateful to me tell General Fabio Conti that you will annul the contract to marry his daughter unless he allows you to give Fabrice that wine and chocolate."

The Marquis's face grew pale, and, instead of brightening at these words, took on a decided expression of discomfort. He could n't believe such a dastardly crime was possible in so moral a city as Parma, under the eyes of so great and good a prince, etc. In a word, the Duchess found herself dealing with a man, honest, it is true, but deplorably weak and utterly incapable of decided action. After a score of similar phrases, which were cut short by Mme. Sanseverina's ejaculations of impatience, he hit on an excellent excuse: the oath he had taken when invested with

Digitized by Google

his office would not allow him to take part in any machination against the government.

Imagine, if you can, the despair and anguish of the Duchess, who saw time that was dearer to her than life itself slipping away from her!

"But at least see the Governor; tell him that I will pursue Fabrice's murderers through this world and the next!"

Despair redoubled the Duchess's natural eloquence, but all that fire and flame only served to frighten the Marquis more and add to his irresolution. At the end of an hour he was even less disposed to act than at the beginning.

The wretched woman, whose despair had attained a depth beyond which it could go no further, feeling that the Governor could refuse nothing to a son-in-law of such enormous wealth, actually groveled on her knees before him, at which Crescenzi's pusillanimous terror seemed to increase, if that were possible. Witnessing the extraordinary spectacle, he feared himself to be compromised for some reason, he knew not what; but a strange thing happened: the Marquis, a generous man at bottom, was touched by

Digitized by Google

the tears and the self-abasement of so lovely and, more still, so influential a woman.

"I, even I, noble and wealthy as I am, may some day be on my knees to a Republican!" he said to himself. He began to cry, and finally it was agreed that the Duchess, in her official capacity, should present him to the Princess, who would give him permission to carry to Fabrice a small basket, of whose contents he was to profess ignorance.

The night previous, before the Duchess had learned of Fabrice's brilliant exploit in surrendering himself at the citadel, there had been a *commedia dell' arte* performed before the court, and the Prince, who always reserved for himself the lover's rôles to be played in concert with the Duchess, had displayed such passion in telling of his love that he would have been ridiculous if, in Italy, an impassioned man or a prince can ever be ridiculous.

The Prince, very diffident, but always very much in earnest in his love-affairs, was passing along one of the corridors, when he encountered the Duchess haling the trembling Marquis Crescenzi before the Princess. He was so impressed with the softened and ten-

Digitized by Google

der nature of the beauty of the great lady in affliction that for the first time in his life he made some display of firmness. He dismissed the Marquis with an imperious gesture and proceeded to make a declaration to Mme. Sanseverina in regular form. He had doubtless prepared his little speech in advance, for in addition to the sentiment it contained much of a more material interest.

"Since my rank will not allow me the supreme felicity of making you my lawful wife, I will swear to you, by all we hold most sacred in our religion, never to marry without your written permission. I know," he added, "that I shall be depriving you of the company of a most agreeable and clever man, a prime minister; but remember that he is fifty-six years old, while I am only twenty-two. I feel it would be insulting you, and that I should merit a rebuff at your hands, were I to speak to you of material advantages; but every one in my court who knows anything of money matters speaks admiringly of the proof of affection that the Count gives you in making you the administrator of his fortune. I shall be only too happy to follow his example in that respect. You will make a better use

Digitized by Google

of my wealth than I could do, and you shall have the entire disposal of the sums that my ministers each year place to the credit of my intendant general; so that it will be you, madame, who will have the say as to how much I am to spend each month." All these details seemed to the Duchess interminably long and tedious; she could only think of Fabrice's peril.

"But oh, my Prince," she cried, "you cannot know that even while we stand here talking Fabrice is being poisoned in your citadel! Save him! I believe all you say."

The time and manner of this phrase were most unfortunate. At the word "poison" all the naturalness, all the frankness and good faith that had hitherto characterized that poor moral Prince's speech vanished like a flash. The Duchess did not see her blunder until it was too late to remedy it; and her despair was redoubled, a thing that she had deemed impossible. "If I had not spoken of poison," she said to herself, "he would have granted me Fabrice's liberty.—O dear Fabrice! is it, then, written that I am always to be thy ruin by my stupidity?"

It required much time and skilful management on the Duchess's part to bring the

Digitized by Google

Prince back to his previous ardent condition, nor even then were his alarm and distrust completely dissipated. It was his mind alone that spoke; his heart had been chilled by the idea of poison in the first place, and after that by this second idea, as displeasing to his vanity as the first was terrible: "Poison is administered in my dominions, and I am left in ignorance of it! Rassi wants to dishonor me in the eyes of Europe! And God knows what the Paris newspapers will have to say of me next month!"

But while the bashful young man's heart was silent, his mind suddenly jumped at an idea.

"Dear Duchess, you know the depth of my attachment. Your frightful suspicions of poison, I hope and trust, have no foundation, but at the same time they give me something to reflect on; they almost make me forget for the moment my love for you, the one and only passion of my life. I know there is nothing attractive about me; I am only a great boy in love for the first time; but test me, see what I am worth."

The Prince became somewhat more animated while delivering this harangue.

"Save Fabrice, and I will believe every-

Digitized by Google

thing! True, I may be misled by fond maternal fears, but send for him, send for him now from the citadel, and let me see him. And if he is living still, send him from the palace to the city prison, and there let him remain until his trial—for months, if it be Your Highness's pleasure."

The Duchess's heart sank on seeing that the Prince, instead of granting her request, which would have cost him but a word, had become somber and thoughtful; his face was flushed. He looked at his companion, then lowered his eyes, and a pallor overspread his cheeks. The suggestion of poison, inopportunely introduced, had inspired him with an idea worthy of his father or of Philip II, but he dared not give it voice.

"Look here, madame," he said at last, as if at the cost of a great effort and in no very gracious tone; "you look down on me as a boy, and as a person, moreover, without attractions. Well, I am going to say something that you won't like, but which is suggested to me by my profound and sincere love for you. If I had believed there was the slightest reason for your fears I should have taken action before this, as it would have been my bounden duty to do; but all

Digitized by Google

I can see in your request is the fantasy of an alarmed imagination, of which, if you will permit me to say so, I don't quite perceive what the result is to be. You wish me to act without consulting my ministers, and I have been on the throne barely three months! You ask me to take this case out from among our ordinary methods of procedure, which I must own appear to me just and reasonable. It is you, madame, who are at this moment the absolute sovereign. You tell me to hope concerning that matter which is nearest to my heart; but in an hour from now, when the nightmare that is troubling you shall have faded into air, my presence will be unwelcome; you will dismiss me ignominiously. I must have an oath, madame; give me your word that if Fabrice is restored to you safe and sound, within three months from now you will grant me all my fondest love can wish for; you will insure the happiness of my entire life by placing at my disposal one hour of yours, and I shall be yours forever."

At that juncture the palace clock struck two. "Ah! it may be too late," thought the Duchess.

"I swear!" she cried, with haggard eyes.

Digitized by Google

The Prince was immediately another man. He ran—actually ran—to the end of the corridor, where was situated the room appropriated to the aides-de-camp.

"General Fontana, get on your horse and ride as if the devil were behind you to the citadel. Go up to Monsignor del Dongo's cell as quick as your legs will let you, and bring him back here with you. I want him here in twenty minutes—fifteen, if possible."

"Ah, General," cried the Duchess, who had followed the Prince, "one minute may mean the difference between life and death. Fabrice is in danger of being poisoned—at least there is a report he is. Shout to him, as soon as you are within ear-shot, not to touch food. If he has begun his meal give him an emetic—tell him it is my bidding that he take it. Use force, if necessary. Tell him I am on the way to him—I shall never forget your kindness."

"Madame, my horse stands ready saddled; I think I know how to handle him, and I will make him do his best. I shall be at the citadel eight minutes in advance of you."

"And I shall ask you for four of those eight minutes, Duchess," exclaimed the Prince.

The aide-de-camp had disappeared; he

Digitized by Google

was a man whose only merit was his horsemanship. As soon as he had closed the door behind him the young Prince, whose character seemed to be improving in resolution, seized the Duchess by the hand.

"Oblige me, madame," he said, in a low, deep voice, "by coming with me to the chapel." The Duchess, who for the first time in her life found herself incapable of answering, accompanied him silently. She and her companion traversed the entire length of the great corridor of the palace, the chapel being at the farther end. When they were within the sanctuary the Prince sank to his knees, whether to the great altar or to the Duchess it would be hard to say.

"Repeat the oath," he passionately said. "If you had been more just, if my confounded rank of prince had not stood in the way of my happiness, you would have accorded me through pity for my love that which you now owe me because you have pledged your word to it."

"If Fabrice is saved from the poisoners, if one week hence he is alive and well, if His Highness shall appoint him coadjutor and future successor to Archbishop Landriani, then honor, womanly reserve, all, shall be

Digitized by Google

thrown to the winds and I will be His Highness's."

"But, dear friend," said the Prince, with a comical mixture of tenderness, timidity, and precaution, "I fear some reservation, some pitfall set to rob me of my happiness. I am sure it would be the death of me. Suppose the Archbishop should prove unreasonable? There are plenty of ecclesiastical quibbles by which he could keep the matter in abeyance for years and years. Where should I be then? I am acting toward you in perfect good faith; are you going to be a little Jesuit?"

"No; if Fabrice is saved, if you do all you can to make him coadjutor now and archbishop at the proper season, farewell to my honor; I am yours. Your Highness pledges himself to write *approved* on the margin of a memorial that Monsignor the Archbishop will present to you during the coming week."

"I will sign you a paper in blank. You shall reign over me and my dominions," cried the Prince, blushing with delight and fairly beside himself. He made her repeat her oath. So great was his emotion that he quite forgot the diffidence which was his

Digitized by Google

distinguishing characteristic, and there in the deserted chapel, alone with his companion, said to her things which, if said three days before, would have materially changed her opinion of him. But the despair caused by Fabrice's peril had ceased to agitate her mind and given way to horror of the promise that had been extorted from her. If she did not as yet fully realize all the degradation of her action it was because her mind was occupied with the question whether General Fontana would reach the citadel in time.

Wishing to change the conversation and put an end to the youth's mawkish protestations, she commenced an enthusiastic panegyric of a picture by Parmeggiano that hung over the great altar of the chapel.

"Let me have the gratification of sending it home to you," said the Prince.

"You are very good; but please let me go to Fabrice now."

She bade her coachman put his horses to a gallop. At the drawbridge of the fortress she met General Fontana and Fabrice, who had just emerged on foot from the structure.

"Did you partake of food?"

"No, by a miracle."

She threw herself on Fabrice's bosom and

Digitized by Google

fainted; her swoon lasted upward of an hour, and excited apprehensions first for her life and afterward for her reason.

Fabio Conti had paled with rage at sight of General Fontana. He manifested such deliberation in obeying the Prince's orders that the aide-de-camp, who had now no doubt as to the Duchess's place in the sovereign's affections, finally lost patience. The Governor had intended that Fabrice's illness should be protracted through several days, and was ill pleased that the General, a man of the court, should witness the agonies that were to punish the young man for his temerity in escaping.

General Conti, gloomy and thoughtful, seated himself in the guard-room in the basement of the Farnèse Tower, whence he dismissed all the men; he wished for no witnesses to the scene that was in preparation. Five minutes later he was almost petrified with astonishment to hear the sound of Fabrice's voice, and shortly after to see him approaching, in perfect health and spirits, on General Fontana's arm. He slunk away.

Fabrice behaved very well—like a "perfect gentleman"—in his interview with the Prince. His chief desire was not to be

Digitized by Google

taken for a child scared by a bugaboo. The Prince graciously asked him how he felt. "I feel enormously hungry, Your Highness, having, fortunately, neither breakfasted nor dined." After he had thanked the Prince he begged permission to see the Archbishop before betaking himself to the city prison. His Highness became very pale on its occurring to him that, after all, the idea of poison might not be entirely a figment of the Duchess's imagination. Absorbed in this disagreeable reflection, he did not at first reply to the young man's request to see the Archbishop, then endeavored to atone for his incivility by a great display of affability.

"You are free to go where you will, Monsignor, unguarded and unattended, in my capital. Only bear in mind to return each night by ten or eleven o'clock to your prison, where I trust your stay will not be long."

On the morrow of this great day, the most remarkable of his life, the Prince looked on himself as a miniature Napoleon. He had read that the great man had been treated kindly by some of the beauties of his court. Once a Napoleon by virtue of his conquest in love, he remembered that he was entitled to the same distinction for having heard the

Digitized by Google

whistling of bullets. He felt a pleasant warmth in the region of the heart as he thought of the firmness of his conduct toward the Duchess. The consciousness that he had achieved something difficult made him another man for the next two weeks; he became more amenable to generous counsels, he displayed more strength of character.

His first act that day was to burn the patent of nobility issued in favor of Rassi, which had been lying on his desk for the past month. He removed General Fabio Conti, and called on Colonel Lange, his successor, for an impartial report as to the alleged poisoning. Lange, a brave Polish officer, questioned the prison employees, and reported that there had been a purpose to poison Monsignor del Dongo's breakfast, but it would have been necessary to admit too many persons to the secret. The dispositions at dinner-time were better made, and had it not been for General Fontana's arrival Monsignor del Dongo's career would have ended then and there. The Prince was dismayed; but as he was really very deeply in love it was a consolation to be able to assure himself, "After all, it was I who saved

Digitized by Google

Fabrice's life. The Duchess won't dare to go back on the promise she made me." Another reflection came to him: "I find my rôle a more difficult one than I had thought for. Every one admits that the Duchess has no end of cleverness; politics and my feelings are in accord in this case. It would be heavenly if she would consent to act as my prime minister."

That evening the Prince was so vexed and disheartened by the horrors he had unearthed that he refused to take part in the comedy.

"I should be only too happy," he said to Mme. Sanseverina, "if you would reign over my land as you reign over my heart. To begin with, I will tell you how I have spent my day." Then he proceeded to give her a faithful narrative of everything: how he had burned the patent of nobility, his appointment of Colonel Lange, the latter's report on the poisoning project, etc. "I find I am sadly lacking in the experience requisite to reign successfully. The Count humiliates me by his pleasantries; he wags his tongue even in the council-chamber, and outside he says things that I know you will admit are untrue: he says that I am a child, and that he leads me about at pleasure. One may be

Digitized by Google

a prince, madame; for all that he is none the less a man, and I tell you such things rankle. I was persuaded to call to the ministry that dangerous scoundrel Rassi, as an offset to Count Mosca's influence; and now that old dotard, General Conti, stands in such fear of the Minister of Justice that he dares not confess that it was Rassi and the Raversi woman who involved him in the plot to murder your nephew. I have a great mind to send General Fabio Conti before the court, and let him have a chance to tell the judges whether or not he had a hand in the nefarious business."

"But, my dear Prince, *have* you any judges?"

"What 's that?" the Prince exclaimed, in amazement.

"You have learned jurists who walk the streets with an air of gravity, but their decisions will always be framed to suit the dominant party of your court."

While the young Prince, deeply shocked, was muttering disconnected phrases that reflected more credit on his candor than on his sagacity, the Duchess was reflecting:

"Is it for my best interest to suffer Conti to be disgraced? It certainly is not, for in

Digitized by Google

that case his daughter's marriage with that milksop, the Marquis Crescenzi, would be out of the question."

A long discussion followed on this subject between the Duchess and the Prince. The sovereign's admiration was unbounded. He favored the marriage between Clelia Conti and the Marquis Crescenzi, and on the Duchess's recommendation pardoned the General for his share in the poisoning plot, but banished him from court until the day of his daughter's wedding. The Duchess believed that her love for Fabrice was dead, but she still looked forward with passionate desire to the marriage of Clelia and the Marquis. She had a vague hope that when the matter was settled and off the board Fabrice's moody preoccupation would disappear in time.

While his rapturous fit was hot on him that evening the Prince would have stripped Minister Rassi of his functions. The Duchess laughed and said to him:

"Do you remember what Napoleon used to say? 'A man placed in a position where the eyes of the world are on him should allow himself to do nothing without reflection.' But it is growing late; let us dismiss business until to-morrow."

Digitized by Google

She wanted an opportunity to confer with the Count, to whom she faithfully reported the conversation of the evening, carefully avoiding any reference, however, to the Prince's frequent allusions to a promise that was the bitterness of her life. She hoped to make her counsels so necessary that she might secure an indefinite postponement by saying to the Prince, "If you should be so barbarous as to insist on subjecting me to that humiliation, for which I could never forgive you, I would leave your dominions on the very next day."

When consulted by the Duchess as to Rassi's fate the Count manifested much philosophy. That worthy and General Fabio Conti departed together for Piedmont.

There was a singular difficulty in relation to Fabrice's trial: the judges wished to acquit him by acclamation at the very first session of the court. The Count found it necessary to resort to menaces before he could prevail on them to protract the trial for a week and listen to all the witnesses. "Those gentry are all tarred with the same stick," he said to himself.

The day succeeding his acquittal Fabrice

Digitized by Google

at last took possession of his place as grand vicar to the good Archbishop Landriani. On the same day the Prince signed the necessary papers to insure his appointment as coadjutor, and in less than two months afterward he was elevated to that dignity.

Every one congratulated the Duchess on her nephew's grave and decorous air. It was not assumed—he was in despair. On the day after his deliverance, closely followed by General Conti's disgrace and banishment, Clelia had sought an asylum at the house of her aunt, the Countess Cantarini, an aged and very wealthy lady, all whose attention was devoted to nursing her infirmities. Clelia might have seen Fabrice; but to one who knew her previous relations with the young man and witnessed her behavior now, it might have seemed that her love for him had ceased at the same time with his perils. Fabrice walked before the Cantarini mansion as often as was decent, and with considerable difficulty had also managed to hire a small apartment opposite, that commanded a prospect of the first-floor windows. On one occasion Clelia, having stepped to the window to look at a passing procession, jumped back as if she had been stung. She

Digitized by Google

had caught sight of Fabrice, attired as a common laborer, watching her from one of the windows of the poor tenement, in which, as in the chamber of the Farnèse Tower, sheets of oiled paper supplied the place of glass. Fabrice would gladly have persuaded himself that Clelia shunned him on account of her father's disgrace, which public opinion attributed to the Duchess; but he knew only too well the real cause of her avoiding him, and was inconsolable.

He was gloomy and impassive; nothing seemed to have power to rouse him from his torpor—neither his acquittal, nor his investiture with his sacred functions, nor his commanding position in society, nor, finally, the assiduous court that was paid him by all the devotees, lay and clerical, of the diocese. The pretty suite of rooms that he had had in the Sanseverina palace no longer answered his needs. The Duchess, to her unbounded delight, found it necessary to give up to him the entire second floor of her mansion and two handsome salons on the first, which were always filled with dignitaries waiting to pay their duty to the young Coadjutor. The clause providing for his succession to the archbishopric had produced a surprising effect

Digitized by Google

throughout the country. Those traits of character which had once so scandalized the needy and silly courtiers were now set down to Fabrice's account as virtues.

It was a good lesson in philosophy to the young man to find himself insensible to all these honors, and far more unhappy in his splendid apartment, where ten liveried lackeys stood ready to do his bidding, than he had been in his narrow cell in the Farnèse Tower, surrounded by repulsive jailers and fearing momentarily for his life. His mother and sister, the Duchess V——, who came to Parma to see him in his glory, were struck by his melancholy. The Marquise del Dongo, now the least romantic of women, was so profoundly alarmed by what she saw that she expressed fears lest he had been given slow poison during his confinement. Notwithstanding her reserve she considered it her duty to speak to him of this unaccountable melancholy. Fabrice's only reply was a flood of tears.

Many material advantages accrued to him as the result of his brilliant position, the only effect of which was to ruffle his temper. His brother, that vain and self-satisfied individual whose soul was cankered with the

Digitized by Google

most sordid selfishness, sent him a letter of congratulation, inclosing a draft for fifty thousand francs, in order, as the new Marquis said, that he might provide himself with an equipage suited to his rank. Fabrice sent the money to the younger of his sisters, who had made an unhappy marriage.

Count Mosca had employed a competent hand to make an Italian translation of the genealogy of the Valserra del Dongo family, formerly given to the world in Latin by old Fabricius, Archbishop of Parma. He had it sumptuously printed, with the Latin and Italian texts on opposite pages. The engravings were reproduced by means of lithographs in the highest style of Parisian art. By the Duchess's special request there was a handsome portrait of Fabrice to face that of his ancestor the Archbishop. The book was published in Fabrice's name, with a note stating that the translation was made during the earlier days of his confinement. But even the vanity of authorship had no place in our hero's bosom; he did not condescend to read a single page of the work that the world attributed to him. His position made it in some sense an obligation to present a copy in fine binding to the Prince, who,

Digitized by Google

by way of amends for the cruel death that had hovered over him so closely, accorded him the *grandes entrées* of his chamber, an honor that entitles the recipient to the title *Excellency.*

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

XXVI

THE only moments during which Fabrice found some slight alleviation of his profound despondency were those that he spent in partial concealment behind a pane of glass which he had substituted for the oiled paper in the window of his apartment opposite the Cantarini mansion, where, as the reader is aware, Clelia was now living. He had been deeply shocked, on the few occasions he had seen her since his departure from the citadel, to notice a great change in her—a change which, it seemed to him, boded no good. Since her transgression Clelia's face had exhibited an expression of nobility and seriousness that was really remarkable; she would have passed for a woman of thirty. This extraordinary transformation, so Fabrice thought, was the out-

Digitized by Google

ward and visible sign of some secret and steadfast resolution. "Daily and hourly," he said to himself, "she renews her oath to be faithful to her vow to the Virgin, and to look on me no more."

Fabrice only divined a portion of Clelia's troubles. She knew that her father, now he was in disgrace, could only return to Parma and show himself at court (a thing that was as necessary to him as breathing) on the day of her marriage to the Marquis Crescenzi. She wrote to her father that she was ready to complete the contract. The General was then residing at Turin, ill with grief and mortification. The result of this generous resolution of hers was to age her by ten years.

She had long since discovered that Fabrice had a window that looked into hers, but only once had she had the misfortune to see him. Whenever she saw a man whose face or figure bore the slightest resemblance to his she immediately shut her eyes. All she had to rely on now was her unfailing piety and her confidence in the help of the Madonna. It was her great misfortune that she could not respect her father. Her future husband was a man of no force of character, whose

Digitized by Google

tastes and ambitions were those of the world in which he lived. Finally, she worshiped a man upon whom she must never lay her eyes again, and who yet had a claim on her. It seemed to her that fate had used her very badly, and in that opinion we agree with her. The only prudent course for her, after her marriage, would have been to go and take up her residence two hundred leagues from Parma.

Fabrice was acquainted with Clelia's shrinking nature; he knew how little she was likely to be pleased with any eccentric enterprise that would be liable to provoke comment if discovered. However, under the pressure of his increasing melancholy and Clelia's constantly averted glances, he ventured on an attempt to seduce two domestics in Mme. Cantarini's household. One day, at the approach of twilight, the young man, disguised as a well-to-do countryman, presented himself at the door of the palace, where one of the domestics in his pay was awaiting him. He announced himself as coming from Turin, and the bearer to Clelia of letters from her father. The servant walked away to do his errand, leaving him in a spacious antechamber on the first

Digitized by Google

floor. It is probable that the fifteen minutes which our hero spent in that room were the most anxious quarter of an hour of his life. If Clelia should deny herself to him, farewell to all hopes of tranquillity in the future. "To free myself from the oppressive burdens that my new dignity imposes on me I will rid the Church of a bad priest, and, assuming a name other than my own, seek oblivion in some *chartreuse*." At last the domestic returned with the message that the Signorina Conti would receive him. Our hero's courage forsook him entirely; it was as much as ever that he reached the second floor without falling in a faint.

Clelia was seated at a little table on which burned a single candle. She had no more than recognized Fabrice under his disguise than she fled and hid herself at the farther end of the apartment.

"This is all you care for my salvation!" she cried, covering her face with her hands. "Yet you know that when my father lay at the point of death from the effects of poison I made a vow to the Madonna never to see you more. I have never been false to that vow save on that day, the unhappiest of my life, when my conscience bade me save you

Digitized by Google

from destruction; and now, when by a forced and I have no doubt sinful construction of its terms I consent to listen to you, I feel that I am doing wrong."

These last words so astonished Fabrice that it took him some seconds to master them sufficiently to feel rejoiced. He had been expecting a violent scene, and to see Clelia disappear in anger. At last he recovered his wits and blew out the solitary candle. Although he thought he had understood the hint conveyed in Clelia's words, his heart fluttered like a leaf as he made for the corner of the salon where she had hidden behind a sofa. He did not know how she would take it if he should venture to kiss her hand. She was palpitating with her love, and cast herself into his arms.

"Dear Fabrice," she said, "what a time you have been in coming! I can only speak with you a moment, for to do so is doubtless a sin; and when I promised never to look on you again the spirit of my promise was doubtless not to talk with you. But how could you be so barbarous as to second the schemes of vengeance against my poor father, who was nearly poisoned to facilitate your escape? Don't you think it was your

Digitized by Google

duty to do something for me, who imperiled my good name to serve you? And then you have taken orders and are bound hand and foot; you could not marry me now, even if I could find a way to get rid of that odious Marquis. And how could you compel me to look on you on the day of the procession, thus causing me to violate before God and man my oath to the holy Virgin?"

Fabrice clasped her in his arms, beside himself with surprise and happiness.

An interview that opened with so many questions to be answered could hardly be expected to be brief. Fabrice told her the whole truth in relation to her father's banishment. The Duchess had never raised a finger in support of the measure, for the very good reason that she had never for a moment believed that the idea of poison originated with General Conti; she had always considered it a portion of the programme of the Raversi faction, whose great object was to ruin Count Mosca. This historic truth, developed at great length, brought gladness to Clelia's heart. It pained her to be obliged to hate any one connected with Fabrice. She no longer regarded the Duchess with a jealous eye.

Digitized by Google

The good feeling that owed its being to that evening lasted but a few days.

The estimable Don Cesare arrived from Turin, and, bold in the consciousness of an upright heart, secured a presentation to the Duchess. When he had obtained her promise not to abuse the confidence he was about to place in her, he confessed that his brother, misled by a false punctiliousness, and considering himself damaged politically and in public opinion by Fabrice's action in escaping, had thought himself entitled to revenge.

Don Cesare had won his case before he had spoken two minutes. His perfect honesty had captivated the Duchess, who was not accustomed to such a spectacle. He pleased her as a novelty.

"Hasten the marriage between your brother's daughter and the Marquis Crescenzi, and I promise to do everything in my power to have the General received as if he were returning from a pleasure-trip. I will invite him to dinner; how will that please you? No doubt there will be a little coolness at the beginning, and the General had best not be in a hurry to ask to be restored to his position as governor of the citadel. But you

Digitized by Google

know I am a great friend of the Marquis, and I sha'n't harbor malice against his father-in-law."

Cheered by these words, Don Cesare went to his niece and told her that it depended on her to save her father, sick with hope deferred. It was months since he had shown his face at a court.

Clelia determined to go to her father, who was living under an assumed name in a village a little way from Turin, for he feared that the authorities at Parma would apply to the government of Turin for his extradition. She found him ill and half crazed with anxiety. That same evening she wrote to Fabrice, breaking with him forever. On receipt of the letter, Fabrice, who had of late developed traits singularly resembling those of his mistress, betook himself to the monastery of Velleja, situated in the mountains some ten leagues from Parma, and went into retreat there. Clelia wrote him a letter ten pages long. She had promised him that she would never wed the Marquis without his consent; now she asked for that consent, and Fabrice granted it from his retirement at Velleja in a letter full of the tenderest and purest affection.

Digitized by Google

On receiving this letter, with whose Platonic tone, it must be confessed, she was not over well pleased, she fixed the day of her wedding, the festivities of which were to lend additional brilliancy to the gaieties that prevailed that winter at the court of Parma.

Ernesto V was naturally of a frugal bent, but he was deeply in love and desired to make the Duchess a fixture at his court. He pressed large sums of money on his mother, and urged her to give splendid entertainments. The windfall was spent to good advantage under the direction of the Mistress of the Robes. The fêtes at Parma that winter recalled the glorious days of the court of Milan under Eugene, Viceroy of Italy, that beloved prince whose generous hospitality was so long remembered.

The Coadjutor's duties had rendered his return to Parma necessary, but he gave out that from motives of piety he should continue his retreat in the small apartment which his protector, Monsignor Landriani, had obliged him to take in the archiepiscopal palace. He accordingly went and secluded himself in his rooms, accompanied by a single domestic. Owing to this reason

Digitized by Google

he was not a participator in any of the gaieties of the court, a fact that was the means of giving him an immense reputation for holiness in Parma and throughout his future diocese. As an unforeseen effect of this retreat, to which Fabrice was impelled solely by reason of his profound and hopeless melancholy, the good Archbishop Landriani, who had always loved him, and with whom, indeed, had originated the idea of making him coadjutor, conceived feelings of jealousy against him. The Archbishop, sensibly enough, saw no harm in attending the balls and other entertainments of the court, as it is customary for men of his cloth to do in Italy. On such occasions he wore all his trappings and ceremonial attire, so that his appearance differed but little from that he presented in the choir of his cathedral. The hundreds of domestics gathered in the great antechamber of the palace never failed to rise and ask Monsignor for his blessing, which he as regularly bestowed on them. It was in one of those moments of solemn silence that Monsignor Landriani heard some one say, "Our Archbishop attends balls, while Monsignor del Dongo does not leave his chamber!"

Digitized by Google

After that the high favor that Fabrice had enjoyed at the palace of the Archbishop came to a sudden end; but he was strong enough now to fly with his own wings. His conduct, which was simply the result of the despair caused by Clelia's marriage, was attributed to his fervent piety, and the godly read the translation of his family genealogy, although it breathed in every line a spirit of worldliness, as if it had been a particularly edifying treatise. Some enterprising booksellers published a lithograph portrait of him, and all the copies were disposed of within a few days, for the most part among the common people. The engraver had, through ignorance, ornamented the margin of the picture with certain emblematic designs that are appropriate to bishops only, and to which a coadjutor is not entitled to lay claim. The Archbishop saw one of the portraits and his fury knew no bounds; he sent for Fabrice and upbraided him in most scathing terms, even stooping to make use of language unbecoming to one of his age and holy calling. As the reader may suppose, it cost our hero no effort to behave as Fénélon would have done under similar circumstances. He listened to the Archbishop

Digitized by Google

with all possible humility and respect, and when the prelate had finished he told him the whole story of the translation made by order of Count Mosca during his captivity. It had been published from motives of worldly policy, which he had always looked on with repugnance as being unsuited to one of his profession. As for the portrait, he had known absolutely nothing of it, nor had he been consulted; and the bookseller having sent to him at the palace while he was in retreat twenty-four copies of the second edition, he had sent his servant out to buy a twenty-fifth; and having by this means ascertained that the portrait was sold for thirty sous, he had sent the bookseller a hundred francs in payment for the twenty-four copies.

These reasons, though set forth in calm and respectful terms by one who had other and far worse troubles to annoy him, only served to fan the flame of the Archbishop's fury; he even went so far as to accuse Fabrice of hypocrisy.

"That is always the way with common people," Fabrice reflected, "even when they are possessed of some sense!"

Another matter that gave him still greater

Digitized by Google

trouble was the frequent and pressing letters of his aunt, who insisted that he should come and occupy his old quarters in the Sanseverina palace, or at all events pay her a visit now and then. If he went there he was sure to hear a great deal of the splendid entertainments given by the Marquis Crescenzi in celebration of his marriage, and he did not feel at all certain that he could stand it without making a spectacle of himself.

At the time of the marriage Fabrice had dedicated himself for eight whole days to absolute silence, having first instructed his servant and the people of the palace with whom he had relations not to speak a word to him.

Monsignor Landriani, having heard of this new vagary, sent for Fabrice much oftener than usual, and engaged him in protracted consultations. He even appointed him to treat with certain country canons, who asserted that the Archbishop had infringed on their privileges. Fabrice received it all with the perfect indifference of a man whose mind is busy with other thoughts. "My best course," he thought, "would be to assume the monk's frock. I should suffer less among the rocks of Velleja."

Digitized by Google

He went to visit his aunt, and was unable to keep back his tears as he embraced her. She too cried a little on beholding the great staring eyes that, owing to his excessive emaciation, seemed starting from his head, and the poor wasted form, clad in the pitiful little threadbare priest's frock; but a moment later, when she had had time to reflect that all that change in the handsome young man's appearance was due to Clelia's marriage, her feelings almost equaled the Archbishop's in virulence, although they were not so openly displayed. She had the cruelty to dwell at length on the delights of the charming fêtes given by the Marquis Crescenzi. Fabrice made no reply, but his eyes closed convulsively and he became paler even than he had been before, which one would have supposed impossible. In these moments of acute suffering his face assumed a greenish hue.

Count Mosca came in, and what he saw—and which seemed to him incredible—cured him forever of the jealousy which Fabrice had never ceased to inspire in him. With all his charming tact and his subtlest and most ingenious methods he endeavored to restore to the young man some interest in

Digitized by Google

the things of this world. The Count had always regarded him with much esteem and considerable friendliness; now the latter sentiment, being no longer counterbalanced by jealousy, became almost devotion. "He has fairly earned his good fortune," he said to himself as he told off the young man's troubles. Under pretense of showing him the Parmeggiano, the Prince's gift to the Duchess, he led Fabrice aside.

"Come, my friend, let 's talk together as man to man. Can I be of use to you in any way? I know you won't consider my questions impertinent—Are you in need of money? Can I serve you with my influence? Speak—I am at your command; or, if you prefer, write me instead."

Fabrice embraced him tenderly and spoke of the picture.

"Your conduct would do no discredit to a veteran politician," said the Count, speaking in lighter vein. "You are arranging for yourself a very agreeable future. The Prince respects you, the people venerate you, and your little shabby coat causes Monsignor Landriani many a wakeful night. I have had some small experience in the business, and I declare to you that, if called

Digitized by Google

on to advise, I should be puzzled what improvement to suggest. Your first step in the world at the age of twenty-five will lead us to expect great things of you. You are much talked of at the court; and do you know to what you are indebted for such a distinction at your time of life? To the little shabby coat. The Duchess and I, as you are aware, have at our disposal Petrarch's old house, situated on the hill among the trees, and overlooking the Po. It occurred to me that if you should ever become disgusted with detractors and calumniators and their dirty ways, you might like to be Petrarch's successor for a while; his fame would add to yours." The Count cudgeled his brains to bring a smile to that ascetic face, but had no success whatever. What made the change more striking was that up to these later days Fabrice's face, if it could be said to have a defect, was rather too apt to wear a mirthful and jovial expression, out of as well as in season.

Before leaving him the Count suggested that, notwithstanding he was in retreat, it might be well to appear at court on the following Saturday, which was the Princess's birthday. The hint was like a dagger in

Digitized by Google

Fabrice's heart. "Good God!" he thought, "why did I ever come to this palace?" He could not help shuddering as he thought of whom he might meet at court. This reflection swallowed up all others. It seemed to him that his sole chance of safety lay in reaching the palace at the exact moment when the doors of the salons were thrown open.

And thus it was that the name Monsignor Fabricio del Dongo was among the first to be announced on the evening of the important function, and the Princess received him with the utmost consideration. Fabrice kept his eyes fixed on the clock, and the moment it told him he had been there twenty minutes he rose to take his departure, when the Prince entered the salon. Having paid his respects, our hero was manœuvering cautiously to reach the door, when his retreat was suddenly arrested by an unforeseen incident for which he was indebted to the Duchess: the chamberlain on duty came up to inform him that he had been selected to make one of the Prince's whist-party. This is considered at Parma a very distinguished honor, one to which the Coadjutor's worldly station did not entitle him to aspire. To sit

Digitized by Google

at the Prince's table was counted a great mark of favor even by the Archbishop. Fabrice's heart sank in his bosom at the chamberlain's command, and although he could not endure the idea of making himself conspicuous, he was about to go and beg to be excused on the ground of sudden indisposition, but he reflected that the questions and condolences to which he would inevitably be subjected would be more intolerable even than to sit out the game. The idea of having to speak was unendurable to him.

Among the distinguished persons who had come to make their congratulations to the Princess, fortunately, was the General of the Friars Minor. This holy and very learned man, a worthy follower in the steps of the Fontanas and the Duvoisins, had chosen a seat in a remote corner of the salon. Fabrice went and stationed himself before him in a position where the door was hidden from him, and began to talk theology. But he could not help hearing the announcement when the lackey bawled the names: "Monsieur the Marquis and Madame the Marquise di Crescenzi." Fabrice, to his surprise, was moved by a violent sensation of anger.

"If I were Borso Valserra," he said to

Digitized by Google

himself (Borso was in his day a general of the first Sforza), "I should just step up to that lout of a Marquis and plant the little ivory-handled poniard that Clelia gave me that day among his ribs. I would teach him better manners than to show himself and his Marquise in a place where I chance to be."

His expression was so altered that the General of the Friars Minor said to him:

"Is Your Excellency unwell?"

"I have a splitting headache—the lights hurt my eyes—and the only reason I don't go away is because I have been commanded to take a hand in the Prince's game."

On hearing this the General of the Franciscans, who was a man of the people, was so taken aback that, not knowing what else to do, he made several profound bows to Fabrice, who on his part, in no less a quandary than the General, began to chatter away with amazing volubility. He noticed that a deep silence prevailed behind him, but would not turn his head to ascertain the cause of it. Suddenly the leader tapped the music-desk with his bow, the orchestra played a *ritornella*, and the celebrated songstress, Mme. P——, began to sing the air, once so

Digitized by Google

popular, by Cimarosa, "*Quelle pupille tenere!*"

Fabrice stood the first few bars pretty bravely, but soon his anger melted away and he felt an irresistible desire to relieve his pent-up feelings by tears. "Good heavens!" he said to himself, "how ridiculous! And in a man of my cloth, too!" He thought his best course was to speak of himself.

"These terrible headaches, when I aggravate them by my neglect, as I am doing this evening," he said to his companion, "generally wind up with a fit of crying, which, in the case of one of our calling, might give rise to ill-natured comment. I will therefore beg Your Most Illustrious Reverence to stand in front of me and otherwise not notice me until the fit is over."

"Our Provincial at Catanzara is troubled with the same infirmity," replied the Franciscan. And in a low voice he commenced to tell a long story.

The absurdity of the yarn, in which was introduced a droll account of the good Provincial's evening meal, brought a smile to Fabrice's face, a thing that had not happened before in a long time; but pres-

Digitized by Google

ently he ceased to listen to the narrator. Mme. P—— was singing with heavenly talent an air of Pergolese (the Princess was addicted to antediluvian music). There was a slight rustling sound a few feet away; for the first time that evening Fabrice turned and looked. A fauteuil there was occupied by the Marquise Crescenzi, whose tear-filled eyes encountered Fabrice's squarely. The young man was in no better state than she. The Marquise dropped her head upon her bosom. Fabrice remained contemplating her for some seconds; he seemed to be endeavoring to recognize that head with its load of diamonds, but his look was expressive of indignation and contempt. Then, saying to himself, "*And my eyes shall never look on you more,*" he turned again to his friend the Father General and said to him:

"I feel my trouble coming on me again worse than ever."

For more than half an hour, indeed, Fabrice continued to weep abundantly. Luckily a symphony of Mozart, horribly mangled, as is always the case in Italy, came to his assistance and helped him to dry his tears.

He withstood temptation and did not turn

Digitized by Google

again to look at the Marquise; but Mme. P—— sang once more—that and the beneficent influence of tears brought a feeling of comfort and repose to the young man's tortured heart. Then life appeared to him in a new and brighter light. "How could I expect," he said to himself, "to forget her entirely after so short an interval? Is the thing possible?" And this idea occurred to him: "Can I be more miserable than I have been for the last two months? And why, if there is nothing that can increase my suffering, should I deny myself the pleasure of seeing her? She has forgotten her oaths; she is fickle—are not all women so? But who shall dare say she has not celestial beauty? Her glance entrances me, while it costs me an effort to so much as look at those women who pass for beauties. Well, what harm is there in submitting to be entranced? At all events, it is a moment's respite from my pain."

Fabrice had some experience of men, but none at all of the passions, else he would have seen that this ephemeral pleasure with which he was about to gratify himself would nullify all his efforts of the past two months to forget Clelia.

Digitized by Google

That much-to-be-pitied woman had only attended the fête on her husband's compulsion. She begged that she might at least be allowed to retire at the end of a half-hour, alleging her health as a reason; but the Marquis told her that to order her carriage when other carriages were still arriving in great numbers would be an unheard-of thing, and might be interpreted as a slur on the Princess's hospitality.

"My position as *chevalier d'honneur*," the Marquis added, "compels me to remain in the salons, subject to Her Highness's orders, until the last guest has departed. There are the servants to be looked after; they are so careless, there 's no trusting them. And would you have a simple equerry of the Princess rob me of that honor?"

Clelia yielded. She had not yet seen Fabrice; she indulged herself with the hope that he would not be there. But as the concert was about to commence, the Princess having intimated her pleasure that the ladies should be seated, Clelia, who was not as rapacious as most women in such matters, allowed the choice seats near the Princess to be filled, and was reduced to the necessity of taking a fauteuil at the extreme end of the room,

Digitized by Google

near the remote corner where Fabrice had concealed himself. On reaching her seat her attention was attracted by the General of the Friars Minor, whose attire struck her as singular for the place and occasion, and at first she did not notice the slender man in plain black coat who was conversing with him. Still some subtle influence continually drew her eyes to the man in black. "Every one here is in uniform or brilliant court attire. Who can he be, that young man so simply and severely dressed?" She was regarding him with profound attention when a new arrival, in taking her place, scraped her chair upon the floor. Fabrice looked round. At first she failed to recognize him, so changed was he. She said to herself, "There is some one who is very like him; it must be his elder brother—but I have always heard it said that he was only a few years older, and this is a man of forty." All at once she knew him by a trick he had of compressing his lips.

"Poor fellow, how he has suffered!" she thought, and lowered her head, but from sorrow and compassion, not in observance of her vow. Her heart was swollen with pity. Nine months' confinement did not reduce

Digitized by Google

him to such a state as this! She did not look at him further, but without turning her eyes in his direction she managed to see his every movement.

When the concert was over she saw him approach the Prince's whist-table, at a few steps from the throne. She breathed more freely when Fabrice had left her neighborhood.

But it had not at all pleased the Marquis Crescenzi to see his wife thus banished into outer darkness, far from the radiance of the throne, and he had been trying all the evening to persuade a lady who had a place three chairs from the Princess, and whose husband owed him money, that it would be to her advantage to change seats with the Marquise. The poor woman objecting, as was quite natural, he went away and speedily returned with the debtor-husband, who at last convinced his better half that there is virtue in yielding to necessity; and so the Marquis had the satisfaction of effecting the exchange. He went off to fetch his wife. "You are altogether too modest," he said to her. "Why do you keep your eyes cast down in that way? Folks will take you for a shopkeeper's wife, whose presence here

Digitized by Google

is a surprise to herself and everybody else. And speaking of tradespeople, I hope that rantipole Mistress of the Robes has enough of them here to-night! And they talk of checking the progress of Jacobinism! Bear in mind that your husband holds the very highest male position at the Princess's court; and if the Jacobins should succeed in doing away with the court, and even the nobility, he would still be the richest man in all this country. That is a fact that I am afraid you don't reflect on as often as you ought."

The fauteuil in which the Marquis had the pleasure of placing his wife was only half a dozen steps from the Prince's table. She could only see Fabrice in profile; but he was so horribly pale and thin, he appeared so dead to the things of this world, he who in the past had always had his quip and merry comment for all that happened, that finally she reached this bitter conclusion: Fabrice was entirely changed; he had quite forgotten her; if he was so emaciated, the reason was to be looked for in the rigorous fasts he inflicted on himself. The conversation of her neighbors confirmed Clelia in this belief. The name of the Coadjutor was in everybody's mouth; all were engaged in guessing

Digitized by Google

what could be the cause of the distinguished honors that were lavished on him. He, so young, to be admitted to the intimacy of the Prince's table! They admired his polite indifference and lofty air in dealing the cards, and even in cutting for His Highness.

"I never saw anything like it!" exclaimed an old courtier. "His aunt's favor has completely turned his head—but it can't last, thank Heaven; such airs of superiority don't go with our sovereign." The Duchess approached the Prince. The courtiers who stood around the table at a respectful distance, where they could only catch a word or two of the conversation from time to time, noticed that Fabrice blushed deeply. "His aunt is reading him a lecture on his airishness," they said to one another. But the truth was that Fabrice had heard the sound of Clelia's voice replying to the Princess, who in making the circuit of the rooms had stopped to speak with the wife of her *chevalier d'honneur*. In the course of the game the time came for Fabrice to change places with another of the players. The movement brought him directly face to face with Clelia, and he could indulge himself with the pleasure of contemplating her *ad libitum*.

Digitized by Google

The poor Marquise was uncomfortable under the fixed gaze of those great eyes. She forgot her vow more than once. In her desire to know what was passing in Fabrice's heart she shot a glance at him.

The game came to an end; the ladies rose to pass into the supper-room; there was a slight temporary confusion. The movement brought Clelia and Fabrice close to each other. The young man's resolution was as firm as ever, but just then his nostrils were saluted by the delicate perfume which she used habitually on her garments. The sensation troubled him, and made him forgetful of his promises to himself. He ranged up closer to her, and in a low voice, as if speaking to himself, recited two verses of that sonnet by Petrarch which he had sent to her from his retreat at Lake Maggiore, printed on a silk handkerchief: "How happy was I when the vulgar deemed me miserable, and now how my lot is changed!"

"No, he has not forgotten me," said Clelia to herself, with rapture. "That true heart is not inconstant!" And she recalled these two lines of Petrarch:

"Ah no, dear eyes that taught me how to love,
Never in me shall you a change detect."

Digitized by Google

The Princess withdrew immediately after supper. The Prince accompanied her to her apartments, and did not return to the reception-rooms. When this became known every one was in a hurry to be gone. There was a general scramble in the antechambers, and in the crush Clelia found herself again at Fabrice's side. The expression of suffering on his face aroused her pity. "Let us forget the past," she said to him, "and keep this token of remembrance"—timidly holding out her fan for him to take.

In an instant, as if by magic, everything was changed in Fabrice's eyes; he was another man. The next morning he announced that his retreat was ended, and returned to take possession of his luxurious apartment in the Sanseverina palace. The Archbishop said and believed that the Prince's manifestation of favor in inviting him to share his game had turned the young saint's head. The Duchess saw that he and Clelia had made their peace. This reflection, in connection with the distress caused by the remembrance of an odious promise, determined her to remove from the court. Every one wondered at such folly. What, leave the court when she was the object of boundless favor, when

Digitized by Google

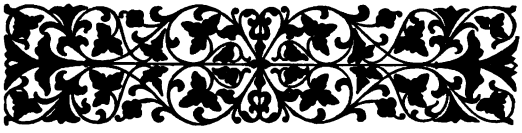
her wishes were gratified almost before she could frame them! The Count, perfectly happy now that he was certain there was no love between Fabrice and the Duchess, said to his friend, "Our new Prince is the epitome of all the virtues, but I called him *boy*. Will he ever forgive me for it? I really can see but one way of redintegrating myself in his good graces, and that is absence. It is my intention to show myself the very pink of politeness and respect, after which I shall be ill and ask to be relieved. You will not object, now that Fabrice is on the road to fortune. But do you think you will be able to make so great a sacrifice for me," he laughingly asked, "as to exchange your illustrious title of *Duchess* for another so much humbler? For the benefit of my successor I shall leave the affairs of the ministry inextricably muddled. I had four or five competent and hard-working men in my different departments. A couple of months ago I discharged them for reading French newspapers, and replaced them by as many blockheads of the first order.

"After our departure the Prince will find matters in such a mess that, much as he detests and despises Rassi, he will be compelled

Digitized by Google

to recall him; and I am only waiting for instructions from the dear tyrant who rules my fate to write a tenderly affectionate letter to my bosom friend, the ex-Minister of Justice, telling him that I have every reason to hope that full justice will be accorded to his merit at an early day."

Digitized by Google



XXVII

THIS conversation took place on the day succeeding Fabrice's return to the Sanseverina palace. The Duchess was still sore over the delight that was manifest in the young man's every word and action. "So," she said to herself, "she fooled me after all, the pious little humbug! She could n't stand her lover off three months."

The certainty of a happy dénouement had inspired that weak-kneed individual, the young Prince, with courage in his love-making. He had heard something of the preparations for travel that were making at the Sanseverina palace, and his French valet, who had not much faith in the virtue of great ladies, spoke cheeringly in regard to his prospects with the Duchess. Ernesto V

Digitized by Google

CALIFORNIA

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

did a thing that was severely censured by the Princess and the graver persons of the court; the people regarded it as the cap-sheaf of the unexampled favor to which the Duchess had attained. The Prince paid her a visit at her palace.

"You are going away," he said in a tender tone which to the Duchess appeared hateful —"you are going away. You are about to deceive me and prove recreant to your oath; and yet ten minutes' hesitation on my part at the critical moment would have entailed Fabrice's death! And you leave me a wretched man; and but for your pledges I should have never had the courage to love you as I do! Have you no sense of honor?"

"I entreat Your Highness to reflect. Have you ever in all your life known greater happiness than during the last four months? Your glory as a sovereign, and, I venture to say, your private felicity, have never reached a higher point. This is the bargain I propose to you. If you agree to it, I shall not be your mistress for a fleeting moment, and by virtue of an oath extorted from my fears; I shall be for all time what I have been for four months past, and who knows but in the end friendship may be crowned

Digitized by Google

by love? I would not assert it will not be so."

"Well, then," said the delighted Prince, "accept another and a higher rôle: be my prime minister; rule over me and my dominions. I offer you marriage in the form which the stupid etiquette of my rank permits. We have an example not far away: the King of Naples has recently married the Duchess of Partana. I offer you all I have it in my power to give—an alliance of the same nature. I do not make this proposition unreflectingly, from a boyish impulse. I am well aware that I shall be the last sovereign of my line; that as soon as I am dead the great powers will cut up my domains and parcel them out among themselves; but I can survey the prospect with equanimity as affording me another opportunity of proving my esteem and love."

The Duchess did not hesitate an instant. The Prince bored her, and the Count was always agreeable and entertaining. Save one, there was no man in all the world for whom she cared as much. Besides, she dominated the Count, while, owing to the exigencies of his rank, the Prince must necessarily, to a certain extent, dominate

Digitized by Google

her. And then there was the chance of his proving inconstant and having mistresses. The difference in their ages would seem to give him a right to do so at no very distant period. But the prospect of being bored was sufficient to settle the question. However, the Duchess, not wishing to appear impolite, asked for time for reflection.

It would be tedious to record all the cajoling and at times almost tender speeches which she made use of to temper her refusal. The Prince grew angry; he saw all his hopes of happiness escaping him. What was he to do after the Duchess had left the court? And then the humiliation of being rejected! What would the French valet say when he heard of his repulse?

The Duchess soothed the irritated Prince by her arts, and gradually led the negotiations back into the desired channel.

"If Your Highness will release me from that odious promise, the fulfilment of which will forever degrade me in my own eyes, my life shall be spent at Your Highness's court, and that court shall always be what it has been this winter. My every moment shall be devoted to contributing to your happiness as a man and your glory as a sovereign. If

Digitized by Google

you hold me to my oath you will have the proud consciousness of having wrecked my life, and will drive me from your dominions never to return. The day that beholds my loss of honor will be the last you will ever see my face."

But the Prince, like all weak natures, was obstinate, and then, too, his pride as man and sovereign was offended by the refusal of his hand. He thought of the opposition the match would excite in every quarter, and that he was resolved to vanquish in spite of everything.

For three hours they continued to belabor each other with the same arguments, often accompanied by warm words. The Prince exclaimed:

"Do you wish me to believe, madame, that you are entirely destitute of honor? If I had hesitated in this way on the day when General Fabio Conti administered the poison to Fabrice, you would now be raising a monument to his memory in one of the churches of Parma."

"Oh no, not in Parma—that city of poisoners."

"Very well, madame; go, then," the Prince

Digitized by Google

angrily replied, "and carry with you my contempt."

He was about to leave the room, when the Duchess said to him, in a low voice:

"Have it so, then, if you will. Be here this evening at ten o'clock, in strict incognito, and you shall have a fool's bargain. You will behold me for the last time, and I would have devoted my life to making you as happy as it is possible for an absolute prince to be in this age of Jacobins. And reflect what you will be when I am no longer here to raise you above the level of your mediocre nature."

"And you, foolish woman, are refusing the crown of Parma, and something more besides; for you would not be an ordinary princess, married from motives of policy, and unloved by her husband. My heart is wholly yours, and you would be forever mistress of my actions as well as of my government."

"Yes, but the Princess your mother would look on me, and rightly, as a vile intriguer."

"Then I would put the Princess on an allowance and send her out of the country."

There was nearly an hour more of sharp

Digitized by Google

rejoinder. The Prince, in his vacillating nature, could make up his mind neither to claim his rights nor let the Duchess go. He had been told that once to possess a woman, no matter by what means, is to keep her.

Dismissed by the indignant Duchess, he came back to the scene of his defeat, trembling and wholly miserable, at three minutes to ten. At 10:30 the Duchess took her seat in her traveling-carriage and started for Bologna. She wrote to the Count as soon as she had crossed the frontier:

"The sacrifice is accomplished. You need not expect to see a cheerful face on me for a month. I shall not see Fabrice again. I shall await you at Bologna, and whenever it suits your convenience am ready to be made Countess Mosca. I have only one thing to ask of you: never force me to return to the country I am leaving, and remember that instead of an income of one hundred and fifty thousand francs, you will have at the outside only thirty or forty thousand. The fools were accustomed to look on you with gaping admiration; now you will receive their consideration only so far as you are willing to stoop to the level of their small

Digitized by Google

ideas. You would have it so, Georges Dandin!"

The marriage was solemnized a week later at Perugia, in a church where the Count's ancestors were buried. The Prince was in despair. The Duchess received three or four communications from him by courier, and in each case sent back his letter with the seal unbroken. Ernesto V bestowed a magnificent largesse on the Count, and gave Fabrice the grand cordon of his order.

"That pleased me more than any portion of his leave-taking," said the Count to the new Countess Mosca della Rovere. "We parted excellent friends. He gave me the grand Spanish cordon and diamonds equal in value to the cordon. He said he would make me a duke were it not that he wanted to reserve that means of recalling you to his country. I have it in charge to tell you, therefore—a pretty commission to intrust to a husband—that if you will return to Parma, were it only for a month, I shall be made duke under any name you may select, and you will be given a handsome estate."

The Duchess refused the offer with something approaching horror.

After the scene at the Princess's birthday

Digitized by Google

ball, which seemed pretty significant, Clelia appeared to forget the love which for a moment she had seemed to share. The pious and virtuous young woman was haunted by the most violent remorse. Fabrice understood how matters were with her, and notwithstanding the fond hopes that he strove to beguile himself with, a somber melancholy settled upon his soul. He did not go into retreat on this occasion, however, as he had done at the time of Clelia's marriage.

The Count had requested his nephew to keep him punctually and fully informed of what occurred at the court; and Fabrice, who was beginning to understand how much he owed his new relative, fulfilled the commission faithfully.

Fabrice shared the opinion of the city and the court that it was his friend's intention to return to the ministry, and with more extensive powers than he had possessed before. The Count's predictions were speedily verified: in less than six weeks after his departure Rassi was prime minister, Fabio Conti minister of war, and the prisons, which the Count had nearly emptied, were full again. The Prince thought he was revenging himself on the Duchess by calling those gentry

Digitized by Google

to power, while in reality he was as madly in love as ever, and hated Count Mosca as a rival.

Fabrice had his hands full. Monsignor Landriani, now seventy-two years old, had sunk into a state of physical and mental decrepitude and scarcely ever left his palace, so that a large share of his functions devolved on the Coadjutor.

The Marquise Crescenzi, distracted by her remorse, and terrified out of her wits by her spiritual director, had hit on an excellent way of avoiding Fabrice. Alleging her approaching confinement in explanation, she made a prison for herself of her own palace. But the palace had an extensive garden in which Clelia took her daily exercise, and Fabrice, having managed to secure access to it, laid in her favorite walk bouquets of flowers arranged in such a manner that they spoke a language, a mystery that he had learned from her during the last days of his sojourn in the Farnèse Tower. The Marquise was vexed by the proceeding; her mind was swayed alternately by her remorse and her passion. For several months she debarred herself from walking in her garden; she even scrupled to look at it from her window.

Digitized by Google

Fabrice was beginning to think that their separation this time was to be eternal, and despair was settling upon his soul. He hated his surroundings and daily avocations, and had it not been for his conviction that the Count could never be contented so long as he was not in power, he would have gone into retreat in his little room at the Archbishop's. It would have been pleasant to live with no other companion than his thoughts, and only hear the sound of a human voice when exercising his functions. "But the Count's and the Countess's interests must be looked after," he said to himself, "and there is none but me to do it."

The Prince continued to treat him with a consideration that made him the envy of the court, and for this favor he was in good part indebted to himself. The extreme reserve which in Fabrice had its origin in an indifference amounting almost to disgust for the affections and small passions that fill men's lives had piqued the young Prince's vanity. He was often heard to say that Fabrice was as clever as his aunt. In the innocent candor of his soul he had a faint perception of one thing: that no one approached him with the fearless independence

Digitized by Google

of Fabrice. It could not escape the observation even of the dullest courtiers that the consideration accorded to the young man was not awarded him in his capacity as coadjutor; it eclipsed even the respect with which the sovereign treated the Archbishop. Fabrice wrote to the Count that if the Prince should ever have sufficient sense to see the pass to which Rassi, Fabio Conti, and others of that stripe were bringing his affairs, he, Fabrice, would be the channel through which he would naturally open negotiations without too great a sacrifice of self-esteem.

"Had it not been for the remembrance of the unfortunate expression *that boy*, applied by a man of genius to an august personage," he wrote to Countess Mosca, "the august personage would not have waited thus long to command, 'Come back at once and rid me of those beggars!' To-day even, if the wife of the man of genius would put her shoulder to the wheel, the Count might be recalled, and his return hailed with enthusiasm; but his triumph will lose nothing of its savor if he will wait until the fruit is ripe to pluck. There is no news to speak of, except that a visitation of ennui has descended on the Princess's salons, where all the courtiers

Digitized by Google

have to divert them is the boorish pranks of Rassi, who seems to have gone crazy on the subject of nobility since he was made a count. Strict orders have recently been issued that no one shall *dare* to present himself at the Princess's soirées who cannot show his eight quarterings of nobility (thus reads the rescript). All those who are now entitled to enter the great gallery in the morning and watch the passage of the sovereign on his way to mass may continue to enjoy their privilege, but new-comers will have to prove their eight quarterings. Apropos to which some wag observed that Rassi is a man who shows no quarter."

As may be supposed, such letters were not intrusted to the post. Mme. Mosca replied from Naples: "We have a concert every Thursday, and tea and talk on Sundays. Our rooms are so crowded that one cannot move. The Count is delighted with his excavations, on which he has limited his expenditure to a thousand francs a month. He has been getting laborers from the Abruzzi of late, who cost him only twenty-three sous a day. You ought to come and see us. This makes about the twentieth time I have told you that, Master Ingrate."

Digitized by Google

Fabrice had no thought of accepting her invitation. The brief letter he wrote daily to one or other of the newly married pair seemed to him an intolerable burden. The reader will pardon him when he is told that a whole year passed in this manner without his once having a chance to speak with the Marquise. All his attempts to establish a correspondence had been repulsed with indignation. The habitual silence which in his disgust with life Fabrice observed on all occasions, except while exercising his functions or at court, together with the absolute purity of his morals, had so exalted him in the veneration of the public that he finally decided to follow his aunt's advice.

"You stand so high in the Prince's favor," she wrote to him, "that you will do well to be on the lookout for a fall. He will begin by slighting you, and his toadies the courtiers will be swift to follow his example. Those small despots, no matter how well meaning they may be, are fickle as the fashion, and the same reason makes them so—ennui. Your only resource against the sovereign's caprices lies in preaching. You have a talent for improvising in verse; see what you can do in the way of speaking from the pulpit. You

Digitized by Google

will doubtless utter some heresies in the beginning; but engage a competent theologian to revise your sermons and correct your faults; you will repair them next day."

It is a well-known fact that to one suffering from disappointed love all mental or physical activity becomes an insupportable burden. But Fabrice told himself that popularity with the masses, should he succeed in gaining it, might some day prove of advantage to his aunt and to the Count, for whom his respect and esteem increased daily in proportion as he became better acquainted with the meanness and ingratitude of men. He made up his mind to preach, and what with his leanness and his shabby coat his success was unexampled. His hearers detected in his discourses a perfume of tender melancholy which, in connection with his handsome face and the stories of the favor he enjoyed at court, carried all the women's hearts by storm. They invented a legend that he had been one of the bravest of Napoleon's captains, and soon the absurd tale was received as history. Places in the churches where he was advertised to speak were at a premium. The poor made money by going at five o'clock and retaining seats,

Digitized by Google

which they afterward sold to the wealthy classes.

Fabrice, emboldened by success, at last became possessed by the idea that the Marquise Crescenzi might some day come to hear him, if from no other reason than curiosity. His delighted audiences perceived that he was surpassing himself. In his moments of exaltation he indulged in a wealth of imagery that would have terrified a practised orator. At times, forgetful of himself and all around him, he would yield to the passionate inspiration of the moment and have all his auditors in tears. But in vain did his hungry eye seek among all those upturned eager faces that face whose presence there would have been such an event to him.

"But if ever that great happiness should be granted me," he said to himself, "either I should be ill or my utterance would fail me." To guard against this latter catastrophe he had composed a fervent and tender prayer, which he kept always by him in the pulpit where he could lay hand on it. His intention was to read this fragment if ever the Marquise's presence should make him tongue-tied.

One day he learned through certain of the

Digitized by Google

Marquis's domestics who were in his pay that orders had been given to make ready the Crescenzi box in the principal theater for the ensuing evening. It was a year since the Marquise had shown herself in public, and the cause of her now infringing on her habit of seclusion was her desire to hear a certain tenor who had excited a furor and was filling the house nightly. Fabrice's first impulse was one of unutterable delight. "I shall be able to feast my eyes on her for a whole evening! It is said she is very pale." And he tried to picture to himself what the lovely face was like, its colors dimmed and half obliterated by stress of mental conflict.

His friend Ludovic, dismayed by what he called his master's folly, with some difficulty secured a box in the fourth tier, nearly opposite the Marquise's. Fabrice had an idea: "I hope she may be tempted to come and hear the sermon, and I will select a very small church, one of which I can command a view of every portion." His usual hour for preaching was three o'clock. On the morning of the day when the Marquise was to attend the opera he had the announcement made that as his duties would detain him at

Digitized by Google

the Archbishop's palace until late in the afternoon, he would preach that evening at half-past eight o'clock at the little Church of St. Mary of the Visitation, which was directly opposite the Crescenzi mansion. Ludovic presented in his name a quantity of wax candles to the Ladies of the Visitation, and requested them to have their church brightly lighted. He had an entire company of the Grenadiers of the Guard at his disposal, and sentries with fixed bayonets were stationed before the chapels to discourage pickpockets.

The sermon had been announced for half-past eight, and at two o'clock the church was completely filled. The tumult in the narrow street that was darkened by the towering palace of the Crescenzi was indescribable. Fabrice had given out that in honor of Our Lady of Pity his sermon would be on the compassion that generous souls owe the unfortunate, even when guilty.

Disguised with the greatest care, Fabrice reached the theater just as the doors were opened and before the house was lighted. The opera began at eight o'clock, and a few minutes later he experienced that delighted thrill that no one can conceive of who has not felt it himself—he saw the door of the

Digitized by Google

Crescenzi box thrown open and the Marquise appear. He had not had so good a view of her since the night she gave him her fan. He was overcome with joy. He felt such strange symptoms that he said to himself, "Perhaps I am about to die! It would be a charming way of ending this weary life. The worshipers at la Visitation will lose their sermon, and to-morrow they will learn that their future archbishop was found dead in a box at the opera, disguised as a liveried servant! Good-by to my reputation! And what do I care for my reputation!"

Somewhat before nine o'clock, however, Fabrice roused himself to an effort. He left his fourth-tier box and succeeded with great difficulty in walking to the spot where he was to exchange his livery-coat for one better suited to his station. It was nearly nine when he reached the Visitation, so pale and weak that the report spread through the church that Monsignor the Coadjutor would not be able to preach that night. The sisters were lavish with their attentions at the grating of their inner parlor, within which he had secluded himself. The good women kept up an incessant chattering. Fabrice requested to be left alone for a few moments,

Digitized by Google

then made his way rapidly to his pulpit. One of his aides-de-camp had told him about three o'clock that the church was crowded to the doors, but by people of the lower class, apparently attracted by the illumination. Fabrice was agreeably surprised on entering the pulpit to find all the seats occupied by young men of fashion and persons of the highest distinction.

His sermon opened with some apologetic words, which were received with stifled murmurs of admiration. Then came the fervid description of the poor wretch on whom it behooves us to have compassion if we would worthily honor the Madonna of Pity, who herself knew such suffering on earth. The speaker was affected visibly; there were times when he had not strength to make himself heard throughout the building. In the eyes of all the women and of a goodly number of the men he himself seemed to resemble the poor creatures for whom he was soliciting their compassion, such was his extreme pallor. Before he had spoken long it was seen that he was not in his usual form; his melancholy that evening was deeper and more tender than usual. At one time tears were seen in his eyes.

Digitized by Google

Instantaneously the congregation broke into sobs, so universal and so violent that the sermon was interrupted for a space.

This first interruption was succeeded by many others; there were cries of admiration, outbursts of weeping; from time to time were heard such ejaculations as, "Ah, holy Virgin!" "Ah, dear Lord!" The emotion was so general and so uncontrollable that no one in that select assemblage was ashamed to raise his voice, and those who were carried away into doing so did not seem ridiculous to their neighbors.

At the usual pause for rest in the middle of the sermon some one informed Fabrice that the theater was absolutely deserted; the Marquise Crescenzi was the only person remaining. During this interval a loud noise was heard in the body of the church; it was the congregation voting by acclaim a statue to the Coadjutor. During the second half of his discourse the applause was so frantic and the demonstrations assumed such a theatrical and profane character that before he left the pulpit he deemed it his duty to address a few words of reproof to his auditors. Thereon they rose and left the church together, strangely silent and sub-

Digitized by Google

dued; but as soon as they reached the street all hands set up a furious hand-clapping, and raised a shout: "*E viva del Dongo!*"

Fabrice hurriedly consulted his watch and ran to a small grated window that gave light to the narrow passage from the organ-loft to the interior of the convent. As a polite attention to the immense and unaccustomed crowd that filled the street, the porter of the Crescenzi palace had placed a dozen lighted torches in those iron receptacles, shaped like mailed hands, that project from the façade of houses built in the Middle Ages. In a few minutes, and long before the tumult in the street had ceased, the young man's eyes were gladdened by the spectacle he was waiting for so anxiously: the Marquise's carriage appeared, returning from the theater. The coachman was obliged to pull up at almost every step his horses took, and it was only after a long delay and much expenditure of lung-power that he deposited his mistress at her door.

The Marquise had been affected by the sublime music, as sorrowing hearts always are, but still more by the deserted condition of the house when she learned its cause. In the middle of the second act, when the

Digitized by Google

favorite tenor was on the stage, the men in the parterre had risen *en masse* to go and try if they might have the luck to squeeze into the Church of the Visitation. The Marquise, when she saw the crowd that blocked the way to her door, burst into tears. "I did not choose so badly!" she said to herself.

But it was on account of this same impulse of tenderness that she bravely resisted the entreaties of her husband and his friends, who could not conceive why she did not care to go and hear so famous a preacher. "Why," they said, "he draws better than the best tenor of Italy!" "If I hear him I am lost!" said the Marquise to herself. It was in vain that Fabrice, whose talent seemed to shine more brightly every day, came several times again to preach in the little church that was overshadowed by the great palace of the Crescenzi. He was never gratified by the slightest glimpse of Clelia, who at last even took umbrage at his persistency in coming to trouble the quiet of her peaceful street after he had deprived her of the use of her garden.

In scanning the countenances of his female listeners, Fabrice had often noticed an ex-

Digitized by Google

tremely pretty and piquant little brown face, with a pair of eyes that shone like diamonds. Those splendid eyes were generally wet with tears by the time he had fairly entered on his discourse. If he ever came to a long and tedious passage that wearied him no less than his audience, he would refresh himself by letting his glances linger on that face that pleased him by its youthful freshness. He ascertained that the young person was Anetta Marini, daughter and sole heiress of the richest merchant draper of Parma, who had died some months previously.

Presently the name of Anetta Marini, the draper's daughter, was in every mouth; she had fallen desperately in love with Fabrice. At the time when the famous sermons began to take the city by storm she was engaged to Giacomo Rassi, the eldest son of the Minister of Justice, for whom she had never evinced dislike; but by the time she had heard Fabrice twice she declared that she no longer cared to marry, and on being asked the reason of so extraordinary a change of mind, replied that it was unworthy of an honest girl to marry one man when she loved another. Her relatives tried to find

Digitized by Google

out, unsuccessfully at first, who that other one might be.

But the tears that the fair Anetta shed so abundantly at the sermons soon put them in the way of discovering the truth. On being asked by her mother and her uncles if she loved Monsignor Fabrice, she stoutly replied that since they had hit upon her secret she would not stoop to tell a lie. She added that, at any rate, if she could n't have the man of her choice, she would n't spoil her eyes longer by looking on the ugly face of the Contino Rassi. This slur cast on the son of a man who was the envy and admiration of the entire bourgeoisie in two days was the talk of the whole city. Anetta Marini's rejoinder was considered delicious, and every one repeated it. At the Crescenzi palace it was spoken of, as it was everywhere.

Clelia's sense of decorum would not allow her to talk of such a matter in her own drawing-room, but she questioned her maid, and on the following Sunday, after hearing mass in the chapel of the palace, took the woman with her in her carriage, and went to attend a second mass at the Signorina Marini's parish church. There, grouped around the door, she found all the gallants

Digitized by Google

of the city, attracted by a curiosity similar to her own. Presently they all began to raise themselves on tiptoe and crane their necks, by which the Marquise knew that the heiress was approaching. She was well placed to see, and, for all her piety, gave but small attention to the service. She thought she discerned in the low-born beauty a little peremptory air which, in her opinion, would have been more becoming in a wife of some years' standing. But her trim little form was a model of grace and symmetry, and her eyes, as the saying goes in Lombardy, seemed to talk with the things on which they looked. The Marquise was satisfied, and did not wait for the end of the services to take her departure.

The next day, when the friends of the family came as usual to spend the evening at the Crescenzi palace, they had a new story to tell of pretty Anetta's wilfulness. As her mother, fearing some imprudence on her part, had stopped her allowance of pocket-money, she had gone to the celebrated Hayez, then in Parma superintending the decoration of the Crescenzi state apartments, and given him a costly diamond ring, a gift from her father, in exchange for a likeness

Digitized by Google

of Monsignor del Dongo; but she insisted that he should be painted in layman's apparel, not in his priestly robes. A few days later little Anetta's mother had been much surprised and still more scandalized to find in her daughter's bedroom a magnificent portrait of the Coadjutor, set in the most gorgeous frame that had been made in Parma in many a year.

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

XXVIII

IN the hurry and bustle of events we have not had time to say much of the courtiers, a comical race of geniuses, who lived and moved at the court of Parma, and made their more or less sapient comments on the matters we have been recording. One of the petty nobility, worth his three or four thousand livres a year, might figure in black silk stockings at the Prince's *levers* provided, in the first place, he had not read Rousseau and Voltaire—a condition which did not bear very onerously on most of them. After that he must exhibit the proper degree of interest in inquiring after the sovereign's cold in the head, or speaking of the last box of specimens received from Saxony. If, having complied with these requirements, you had been punctual at mass three hun-

Digitized by Google

dred and sixty-five days in the year, and numbered among your friends three or four fat priests, His Highness would condescend to speak to you once a year, two weeks before or two weeks after the 1st of January; which gave you great distinction in your parish, and the collector would not be too hard on you were you a little behindhand with the hundred francs in which you were indebted to the treasury as a tax on your little property.

Among these illustrious and happy mortals was the Signor Gonzo, a man of noble descent, who, in addition to some slender means of his own, had through the Marquis Crescenzi's influence obtained a magnificent place that brought him in no less than eleven hundred and fifty francs a year. The poor devil might have dined at home, but he had a weakness: he was never happy and contented except when seated at the board of some great man who said to him from time to time, "Shut up, Gonzo; you are a fool." This dictum was probably the result of ill humor, for Gonzo was generally the great man's superior in intelligence. He was always prepared to hold forth on any topic with great fluency. Further, he was so

Digitized by Google

obliging as to back down and reverse his opinion at a wink from the master of the house. To tell the truth, though adroit enough in looking out for his own interests, he had not a single conviction, and when the Prince had not a cold, was sometimes wofully embarrassed on entering a drawing-room.

What had given Gonzo a reputation in Parma was a magnificent three-cornered cocked hat, adorned with a sweeping but rather frowzy black plume, which he was wont to wear on occasions of ceremony. It was worth going a mile to see the air of grandeur with which he doffed that hat to an official. When he inquired after the health of the Marquise's poodle his face wore an expression of anxiety that was almost tragic; and had the palace caught fire he would have risked his life to save one of the fine gold-embroidered fauteuils on which he had been wearing out the seat of his black silk breeches for so many years whenever he was so audacious as to sit down.

Seven or eight individuals of this kidney presented themselves nightly at seven o'clock in the Marquise Crescenzi's drawing-room. As soon as they were fairly seated an impos-

Digitized by Google

ing flunky in canary-colored small-clothes and scarlet coat and waistcoat, all plentifully laced with silver, came and relieved the poor beggars of their hats and canes. Immediately behind him came a valet in black, with coffee in cups of the size and shape of a thimble, supported on little stands of silver filigree; and every half-hour a valet with a sword and gorgeous coat *à la Française* served ices.

Half an hour after the little seedy courtiers, five or six officers would come on the scene, talking loudly and swaggering after the manner of their kind, their theme generally the number and kind of buttons that should be sewed on the soldiers' jackets to enable the commander-in-chief to win victories. It would not have been safe to quote from a French newspaper in that salon, for even had the news been of an agreeable character—fifty Liberals executed in Spain, for instance—the narrator would still have been brought in guilty of having read the tabooed journal. The height of the ambition and address of all those worthies consisted in obtaining an increase of salary of one hundred and fifty francs every ten years. It is thus that the Prince shares with his faithful

Digitized by Google

nobles the pleasure of reigning over peasants and bourgeois.

The person whose credit stood highest in the Crescenzi salon was beyond all question the Chevalier Foscarini, a perfectly upright man, which doubtless was the reason why he had spent so much of his time in prison under all the various administrations. He had been a member of that famous Chamber of Deputies at Milan which rejected the registration law presented by Napoleon—a thing not often seen in history. The Chevalier had been for twenty years the friend of the Marquis's mother, and was now regarded almost as a member of the family. He was always ready with a joke or pleasant tale; but nothing escaped his sharp and watchful eye, and the young Marquise, who was painfully conscious of her guilt, trembled in his presence.

As Gonzo's weakness was to hob-and-nob with great men, who regularly insulted him and often made him cry, he was constantly on the lookout to do them small services, in which he would have succeeded better had it not been for his extreme poverty; for he possessed considerable capacity and a still larger measure of effrontery.

Digitized by Google

Gonzo, constituted as he was, had no very friendly feeling for the Marquise Crescenzi, for she never troubled herself to be particularly polite to him; but then she was the wife of the great Marquis Crescenzi, *chevalier d'honneur* to the Princess, and who was accustomed to say to him once or twice a month, "Shut up, Gonzo; you are making a fool of yourself."

Gonzo noticed that every time little Anetta Marini's name was mentioned the Marquise seemed to awake from the abstracted and preoccupied condition in which she was habitually sunk up to the moment the clock struck eleven, at which hour she brewed the tea, calling up each man by name and handing him a cup. After that, and up to the moment when she retired from the company, she was brighter and manifested more interest in what was going on, and that was the period selected by the political sonneteers for reading their caustic effusions.

The Italians excel in this style of composition, which is the only one that still retains a little life and nature, possibly because it is not subjected to the revision of the *censure*. The parasites of the Casa Crescenzi invariably prefaced their performance with these

Digitized by Google

words: "Will Madame la Marquise condescend to listen to a bad sonnet?" And when the production had been encored two or three times, and the laughter had subsided, one of the officers would say, "The Minister of Police ought to treat the author of such calumnies to a short shrift and a long rope." In bourgeois circles, on the other hand, the sonnets were received with the most outspoken admiration, and the lawyers' clerks kept copies of them for sale.

Judging from the curiosity displayed by the Marquise, Gonzo imagined that too much fuss had been made over the beauty of the Marini girl—who, besides, was worth her million—and she was jealous. As he had the run of most of the great houses with his everlasting smirk and his cringing manner to the great, he presented himself the next evening at the door of the Crescenzi palace, wearing his cocked hat and feather with a certain conquering air that he assumed only once or twice a year, after the Prince had said to him, "Good-day, Gonzo."

After he had made his obeisance to the Marquise, Gonzo did not move away as usual to take the seat that the lackey had

Digitized by Google

placed for him. He stepped forward into the middle of the circle and abruptly proclaimed, "I have seen the portrait of Monsignor del Dongo." Clelia was so taken by surprise that she had to support herself on the arm of her fauteuil. She tried to weather the storm, but was presently obliged to leave the room.

"You have put your foot in it again as usual, my poor Gonzo," cynically exclaimed one of the officers, who was just finishing his fourth ice. "Can it be you don't know that the Coadjutor, who was one of the bravest colonels in Napoleon's army, played the Marquise's father a scurvy trick not long ago by walking out of the citadel, where General Conti was in command, as unceremoniously as you would leave the Steccata?" (the principal church of Parma).

"There are many things that I don't know, my dear Captain, and I am a poor ignoramus who am making blunders all day long."

This retort, which was essentially Italian in spirit, raised a laugh at the brilliant officer's expense. The Marquise returned to the room shortly afterward. She had called up her courage to her assistance,

Digitized by Google

and was not without a vague hope of herself seeing that portrait of Fabrice of which so much was said in praise. She spoke enthusiastically of the talent of Hayez, who had painted it. She unconsciously directed one of her sweetest smiles at Gonzo, who looked victoriously at the officer. As all the other toadies of the house treated themselves to the same gratification, the officer beat a retreat, vowing everlasting hatred to Gonzo. The latter's triumph was complete, and on leaving he was invited to dinner for the following day.

"More news for you!" cried Gonzo after dinner the next day, when the servants had left the dining-room. "What do you think? Our Coadjutor is in love with the little Marini girl!"

To attempt to describe the Marquise's agitation on hearing this extraordinary intelligence would be useless. Even the Marquis was affected.

"But Gonzo, my friend, you are talking at random, as usual; and you ought to speak more respectfully of a man who has eleven times had the honor of being His Highness's partner at whist!"

"That may all be, Your Excellency,"

Digitized by Google

Gonzo rejoined, with the vulgarity of people of his stamp, "but I can assure you that he would like to be the little Marini's partner as well. But I see that these details are disagreeable to you. They have ceased to exist for me, whose first and sole wish it is to do nothing to offend my noble Marquis."

It was the Marquis's custom to retire after dinner for a siesta. He had no thought of doing so that day; but Gonzo would have cut his tongue out sooner than say another word on the subject of Signorina Marini, and he even tantalized the Marquis by so framing his speeches as to lead the latter to believe that he was about returning to the topic of the draper's daughter's loves. The poor Marquis, itching with curiosity, was obliged to make advances. He told Gonzo that whenever he was favored with his company at table he ate twice as much as usual. Gonzo did not take the bait; he began to tell of a magnificent collection of paintings that the Marquise Balbi, the late Prince's mistress, was forming. Three or four times he spoke of Hayez, dwelling on his name with an accent of profound admiration.

"Good! At last he is coming to the portrait for which little Anetta gave her

Digitized by Google

diamond ring!" said the Marquis to himself. But that was a thing which Gonzo had no intention of doing. It struck five, to the Marquis's disgust, whose custom it was to go for a drive in the Corso at half-past, after he had had his nap.

"It's just like you with your infernal stupidity!" he said, angrily, to Gonzo. "You will be the cause of my reaching the Corso after the Princess, who may have orders to give her *chevalier d'honneur*. Come, hurry up! Tell me, as briefly as you are capable of doing, what is there about these alleged love-passages of Monsignor the Coadjutor?"

But Gonzo preferred to save the story for the Marquise, who had invited him to dinner. He despatched in a few brief words the narrative that was the object of the other's wishes, and the Marquis, half asleep, went off to secure his forty winks. Gonzo assumed an entirely different manner with the poor Marquise. She had remained so simple and unaffected in the midst of her good fortune that she thought it her duty in some sort to make amends for her husband's boorishness in speaking to their guest. Charmed by this delicate attention, the latter soon recovered all his volubility,

Digitized by Google

and made it his pleasure no less than his duty to supply her with abundant details.

Little Anetta Marini gave as much as a sequin each for the places that were retained for her at the sermons. She always went attended by two of her aunts and an old clerk of her father's. These places, which were always occupied many hours in advance, were generally selected nearly opposite the pulpit, but slightly toward the great altar; for she had observed that the Coadjutor turned his face most frequently in that direction while preaching. The public, too, had observed that not infrequently the young preacher's eyes rested kindly on the youthful heiress's piquant beauty, and apparently with an intention; for as soon as his gaze was fixed on her his sermon became more abstruse, scriptural quotations abounded, and it was no longer animated by those eloquent outbursts that come straight from the heart; whereat the ladies, suddenly losing all interest in the proceedings, would turn to look at Anetta and begin picking her to pieces.

Clelia made her informant repeat all these particulars three times over. After the third repetition she sank into a reflective mood;

Digitized by Google

she was thinking it was fourteen months since she last saw Fabrice. "Would it be very wrong," she asked herself, "to spend an hour in a church, not to see Fabrice, but to hear a celebrated preacher? Besides, I will select a seat at a distance from the pulpit, and I will only look at him twice, once on entering and once on coming away. No, it is not Fabrice I shall go to see—it is the great preacher!" In the midst of her debate the Marquise's conscience pricked her; her conduct had been so exemplary for the last fourteen months! "Well," she finally decided by way of compromise, "if the first woman to make her appearance here to-night has been to hear the Monsignor preach I will go too; if she has not I will stay away."

That matter settled, the Marquise made Gonzo happy by saying to him:

"Try to find out, if you can, on what day the Coadjutor preaches next, and in what church. I may have a service to ask of you this evening before you go away."

When Gonzo had taken his departure for the Corso, Clelia went out into her garden for a breath of fresh air. It did not strike her as an objection that she had not set foot in it for more than ten months. She was

Digitized by Google

animated and cheerful; she had hoisted her colors in her cheeks. Her heart palpitated with emotion every time another member of the great army of bores entered her salon during the evening. At last Gonzo was announced, who saw at the first glance that his services were going to be in request. "The Marquise is jealous of the Signorina Marini," he said to himself; "and faith, it would be a comedy worth seeing in which madame should be cast as leading lady, Monsignor del Dongo as the lover, and little Anetta as the soubrette—tickets would n't be dear at two francs apiece." His joy was such that he could not have told whether he was standing on his head or on his heels; and he manifested it throughout the evening by his absurd behavior, cutting in and taking the words out of people's mouths, and relating the most preposterous stories (that of the actress and the Marquis de Pequigny, for instance, which had been told him the day before by a French gentleman). The Marquise, for her part, could not sit still. She paced her salon, extending her rambles to the adjoining picture-gallery, to a place on whose walls the Marquis had admitted only such paintings as had cost twenty thousand

Digitized by Google

francs or more. These paintings appealed in such plain language to the Marquise's heart that evening that the emotion they inspired was almost unendurable. At last she heard the great doors flung open, and hurried back to the salon. It was the Marquise Raversi. Clelia's voice failed her while addressing her the customary salutations. Mme. Raversi was obliged to ask her to repeat her question, "What do you think of our new preacher?"—not having heard it the first time.

"I did regard him as a little meddling busybody, the worthy nephew of the illustrious Countess Mosca; but the last time I heard him preach—it was at the Church of the Visitation, directly opposite your house—he was so sublime that, laying aside my detestation of the man, I said that he was the most wonderful pulpit orator I ever heard."

"You have heard him, then?" said Clelia, in a flutter of gratification.

"What, were n't you listening to what I said?" the Marquise laughingly replied. "I would n't miss hearing him for anything. They say he is consumptive and won't preach much longer."

Digitized by Google

As soon as the Marquise was gone Clelia summoned Gonzo to the picture-gallery.

"I have pretty nearly made up my mind to go and hear this preacher of whom people talk so much," she said. "When does he preach next?"

"On Monday, three days from now; and it looks as if he had divined Your Excellency's intention, for he will preach in the Church of the Visitation."

There were other matters to be adjusted, but Clelia was unable to say more just then. She took half a dozen turns up and down the gallery without speaking another word. Gonzo said to himself, "She is concocting schemes to avenge her father. How a man could have the impudence to bolt from prison, and especially when he had the honor to be intrusted to the care of an old hero like General Fabio Conti, is more than I can conceive!

"But she 'll have to hurry up if she wants to hear him," he added, with fine irony; "his lungs are nearly gone. I heard Dr. Rambo say that his life is n't worth a year's purchase. It is God's punishment for his wicked, sly escape from the citadel."

The Marquise seated herself on a divan

Digitized by Google

and signed to Gonzo to follow her example. Presently she handed him a little purse containing a few sequins. "Secure four places for me."

"May poor Gonzo hope to be allowed to make one of Your Excellency's suite?"

"Certainly; retain five places. I don't care particularly to be near the pulpit," she added, "but I should like to have a chance to see the Signorina Marini, who is said to be so beautiful."

The Marquise waited with feverish impatience for the eventful Monday, the day appointed for the sermon. Gonzo, for whom it was a distinguished honor to be seen in public in the suite of so great a lady, had donned his best French coat and sword. Moreover, taking advantage of the proximity of the palace, he had had the servants carry into the church a magnificent gilded fauteuil for the Marquise's use, to the great scandal of the congregation. Poor Clelia's dismay may be imagined when she saw the ostentatious seat that had been prepared for her directly in front of the pulpit. Lowering her eyes in confusion, and shrinking as if trying to hide herself in the recesses of her capacious fauteuil, she had not even the

Digitized by Google

courage to look at the little Marini, whom Gonzo pointed out to her with inexpressible effrontery. In the parasite's eyes every one who was not noble counted absolutely for nothing.

Fabrice entered the pulpit. He was so pale, so thin and wasted, that Clelia's eyes at once filled with tears. He spoke a few words, then stopped short, as if his voice had suddenly failed him. After a vain struggle to regain his self-command he turned and took a written paper from a chair behind him.

"My brethren," he said, "a fellow-being in distress, worthy of all your pity, requests your prayers for the cessation of his torments, which will end only with his life.'

Fabrice read his paper very slowly, but with such depth of expression that before he reached the middle of the supplication every one, even including Gonzo, was weeping. "They won't notice me, at all events," said the Marquise to herself as she gave way to her emotion with the rest.

At the beginning of his reading two or three fresh thoughts occurred to Fabrice, and he incorporated them in his discourse. Soon ideas and images came thronging on

Digitized by Google

his brain. While addressing himself to the public in appearance, he spoke only to the Marquise. He brought his discourse to a close somewhat earlier than usual, because, fight against it as he might, his sensibility so overcame him that he could no longer articulate distinctly. Good judges thought the sermon rather eccentric, but decided that on the whole, as regarded pathos, at all events, it was quite up to the level of his best efforts. As for Clelia, he had hardly read the first ten lines of his prayer when she came to the conclusion that she had been guilty of a crime in letting fourteen months go by without seeing him. As soon as she reached home she went to bed, that she might have an opportunity of reflecting undisturbed; and early next morning Fabrice received a note conceived in these terms:

"The writer counts on your honor. Hire four *bravi* on whose fidelity you can rely, and to-morrow night, as the clock of la Steccata is striking twelve, be in St. Paul Street opposite a small house whose number is 19. You may be attacked; be sure not to come alone."

Fabrice, on recognizing the dear handwriting, dropped to his knees and burst

Digitized by Google

into tears. "At last," he cried, "after fourteen months and eight days! Adieu to preaching!"

It would be too long a task to attempt to describe the delirium that possessed the two parted lovers' hearts that day. The No. 19 mentioned in the note proved to be the entrance to the orangery of the Crescenzi palace, and at least ten times during the day Fabrice found an excuse for inspecting it. He armed himself, and alone, a little before midnight, approached with rapid steps the haven of his hopes. As he came opposite the door he heard a well-known voice say in a low tone:

"Enter, friend of my heart."

Fabrice obeyed, and found himself in the orangery indeed, but confronted by a heavily barred window some three or four feet above the floor. The darkness was intense. He was exploring the locality by means of his sense of touch, when suddenly a hand was thrust through the bars, seized his, and raised it to lips that imprinted on it a warm kiss.

"It is I," said a loved voice. "I am here to tell you that I love you, and ask if you will follow my instructions."

The reply may be imagined, as may the

Digitized by Google

young man's astonishment and delight. After the first blissful moments Clelia said to him:

"As you are aware, I have a vow registered with the Madonna never to look on you. It is for that reason that I receive you in this profound darkness. I wish you to understand that if ever you should force yourself on my vision by daylight all would be at an end between us. But in the first place, I don't want you to preach any more before that Anetta Marini, and you are not to believe that it was I who was so silly as to introduce a fauteuil into the house of God."

"Dear angel, I will preach no more before any one. I only took up preaching in the hope that I might see you some day."

"Don't talk like that; remember that it is illicit for me to see you."

We now ask permission of the reader to carry our narrative forward to a period three years later.

When the curtain rises on the last act of the play Count Mosca had long been back in Parma as prime minister, and was more powerful than he had ever been before.

Digitized by Google

At the expiration of these three years of divine happiness, Fabrice's tenderness induced in him a caprice that wrought great changes in the circumstances of our characters. The Marquise had a charming little boy of two years, Sandrino, who was continually on his mother's lap or in the arms of the Marquis Crescenzi. Fabrice, on the other hand, scarce ever saw him. Our hero did not wish that the child should form the habit of loving another father; hence he conceived the idea of abducting him while his recollections were still indistinct.

Little Sandrino's company served as a consolation to the Marquise during the long hours of daylight when she was unable to see her friend; for we have to state a fact that will appear strange to dwellers north of the Alps: in spite of her irregularities she had remained faithful to her vow. She had promised the Madonna, it will be remembered, that her eyes should never behold Fabrice again; those were her exact words. She consequently never received him except at night, and the apartment was always unlighted.

But he paid a nightly visit to his mistress, and in the midst of a court consumed by

Digitized by Google

ennui and curiosity, strange as it may appear, Fabrice's precautions were so well taken that never so much as a suspicion rested on this *amicizia*, as the thing is termed in Lombardy. Their love was too intense that there should not be occasional quarrels. Clelia was inclined to be jealous, but almost always their disputes originated in another cause. Fabrice had availed himself of some public function to enter a place where the Marquise was and look at her. She left the company abruptly on some pretense or other, and thereafter for a long time refused to receive her lover.

It surprised the busybodies of Parma that no intrigue could be traced to a woman of such beauty and spirit. She inspired numerous passions, some of which resulted in imprudences; and Fabrice, too, was jealous, though without reason.

The good Archbishop Landriani had long been dead, and his virtues were forgotten in Fabrice's piety, exemplary morals, and eloquence. His elder brother, too, had departed from this world, and the family possessions had descended to our hero. From this time forth he distributed among the vicars and curés of his diocese the hundred and odd

Digitized by Google

thousand francs of revenue that he received from the archbishopric of Parma.

It would be difficult to imagine a more honored, more respectable and useful life than that which Fabrice had constructed for himself, when all was spoiled by that unfortunate caprice of tenderness.

"Owing to that vow, which I respect, and which is nevertheless the bane of my life, since you will not let me see you by daylight," he said one day to Clelia, "I am obliged to lead a solitary existence, with no other distraction than my work. In my cheerless loneliness an idea has presented itself to me which torments me, and against which I have been contending for the last six months. My son never hears my name spoken; I shall never have his love. Reared as he is in the lap of luxury in the Crescenzi palace, he scarcely knows my face. On the few occasions when it is granted me to see him I think of his mother, of whose celestial beauty he reminds me, and whom I am forbidden the gratification of beholding; and his opinion of me will be that I am grave, which to children means forbidding."

"Your language alarms me," said the Marquise. "What have you in mind?"

Digitized by Google

"To regain possession of my son. I want him to live with me; I want to see him every day, that he may become accustomed to loving me, that I myself may have an opportunity of loving him. Since unkind fate has decreed that I am to be deprived of a pleasure enjoyed by such multitudes of happier men, and that I am not to spend my life with the object of my adoration, I wish at least to have by me a being who will remind me of you, and in some sense replace you. I have to deal with affairs and men in my compulsory solitude. You know that ever since the time I had the good fortune to be locked in the Farnèse Tower ambition has been an empty word for me; and in the melancholy which settles on me when not with you, all seems to me trivial and of no importance except the sensations of my heart."

The reader will understand the pain which her friend's sorrows inspired in poor Clelia's gentle bosom. Her distress was the greater that she felt Fabrice was in a measure right. She went so far as to question whether it were not her duty to break her vow. She could then receive Fabrice in the daytime, and her reputation for propriety was so

Digitized by Google

firmly established that no one would be likely to misinterpret her action. She said to herself that money would obtain for her a dispensation; but she also felt that this sordid arrangement would not still the reproaches of her conscience, and that it might well be that an irritated God would punish her for that fresh crime.

On the other hand, if she yielded her assent to Fabrice's extremely natural desire, if she strove to alleviate the sufferings of him whose tender heart she knew so well, and whose peace of mind her strange oath had so endangered, what likelihood was there of stealing the only son of one of the greatest noblemen of Italy without the offense being detected? The Marquis Crescenzi would spend enormous sums of money, would put himself at the head of search-parties, and sooner or later the truth would come to light. There was but one means of obviating that danger—to send the child away to a great distance—to Edinburgh, for instance, or to Paris; but that was a step which a mother's affection refused to contemplate. The other means proposed by Fabrice, which was, indeed, more reasonable, had something ill-omened in it, and was

Digitized by Google

even yet more horrible in the eyes of the dismayed mother. "The child must have a fictitious illness," said Fabrice; "he will grow worse and worse, and finally, while the Marquis Crescenzi is away from home, will die."

A repugnance which amounted in Clelia almost to loathing caused a rupture which it was impossible should last.

Clelia contended that it would not answer to tempt the Deity; that the child whom they loved so fondly was the fruit of crime, and that if they provoked the celestial anger further, God would surely take it to Himself. Fabrice again urged his strange destiny. "The position in which fortune has placed me, and my love, constrain me to eternal solitude," he said to Clelia. "I cannot, like the great majority of my fellow-beings, enjoy the sweet pleasures of domestic life, because you will only receive me in darkness, and thus the portion of my life which I can spend with you is reduced to instants, so to speak."

Tears flowed freely. Clelia fell ill; but she loved Fabrice too dearly to persist in refusing the terrible sacrifice he asked of her. Sandrino was apparently taken sick; the Marquis at once called in the most

Digitized by Google

celebrated physicians, and Clelia thereon encountered a perplexity on which she had not counted: the child must not be allowed to take the remedies prescribed by the doctors—a matter of no small difficulty.

Sandrino, confined to his bed more than was good for his health, became ill in earnest. How could she tell the doctor the true condition of affairs? Distracted between two dear and opposite interests, Clelia had nearly lost her reason. Would it be best to let the child apparently recover, and thus sacrifice the results of their long and painful stratagem? Fabrice, for his part, could neither forgive himself for the suffering he was inflicting on his mistress, nor make up his mind to abandon his project. He had found a means of being introduced every night to the room of the little invalid, and this had entailed another complication. The Marquise was there to nurse her son, and at times Fabrice could not avoid seeing her by the light of the candles, which seemed to Clelia's poor diseased mind an inexpiable sin presaging the death of Sandrino. It was in vain that the most celebrated casuists, consulted in relation to obedience to a vow in case its performance should be deleterious,

Digitized by Google

gave answer that a vow could not be considered as broken with criminal intent when he who had plighted his faith to the Deity acted, not from carnal and unworthy motives, but to prevent a manifest evil. The Marquise's condition was most pitiable, and Fabrice beheld the moment approaching when death should rob him of both Clelia and his son as a result of his fantastic idea.

He had recourse to his best friend, Count Mosca, who, veteran diplomatist though he was, was touched by the details of a love-story of which he was for the most part ignorant.

"I can arrange the Marquis's absence for you, at all events for a space of five or six days. When will you have it?"

Shortly afterward Fabrice approached the Count to say that all was in readiness for them to take advantage of the proposed absence.

Two days after that, as the Marquis was returning on horseback from one of his estates in the neighborhood of Mantua, he was waylaid and carried off by a troop of brigands, apparently hired for the gratification of some scheme of personal revenge. The rascals offered him no violence, but

Digitized by Google

placed him on board a boat, which descended the Po for three days, following the same itinerary that Fabrice had pursued in former days after his affair with Giletti. On the fourth day the brigands landed their captive on an uninhabited island in the Po, having first conscientiously relieved him of his money and all his valuables. The Marquis was two entire days in regaining his palace at Parma, which he found draped with black, and all his household in deepest mourning.

The abduction, which had been managed with great address and secrecy, had a fatal result: Sandrino, concealed in a handsome and commodious house, where his mother came to see him almost daily, died within a few months. Clelia would have it that it was a punishment visited on her from on high for having been false to her vow to the Madonna. Had she not often seen Fabrice by candle-light, and twice even in open day, and with transports of tenderness, while poor little Sandrino was lying ill? She survived only by a few months the son who was so dear to her, but the boon was granted her of dying in her lover's arms.

Fabrice's love was too deep, and he was

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

too sincerely pious, to permit of his having recourse to suicide. He hoped to meet Clelia in a better world, but his conscience told him that there was much for which he would have to make reparation.

A few days after Clelia's death he signed papers assuring to each of his servants a pension of one thousand francs and reserving an equal allowance for himself. He bestowed landed property whose yearly rental was in the neighborhood of one hundred thousand francs on the Countess Mosca, and an equivalent amount in money and securities on his mother, the Marquise del Dongo. The remainder of his paternal inheritance went to an unhappily married sister. The next day, having first forwarded to the persons qualified to receive them the resignations of his archbishopric and of the various posts to which the favor of Ernesto V and the kindness of the Prime Minister had successively raised him, he retired to the Chartreuse de Parme, situated in the forest near the Po, two leagues from Sacca.

The Countess Mosca had at the time approved of her husband's resuming his functions as minister, but she could never be prevailed on to set foot again on soil be-

Digitized by Google

longing to Ernesto V. She held her court at Vignano, a little less than a mile from Casal-Maggiore, on the left bank of the Po, and consequently in Austrian territory. There, in the magnificent palace that the Count had built and given her, she received the élite of Parmesan society on Thursdays, her numerous friends at any time. Fabrice never missed a day in presenting himself at Vignano. The Countess, in a word, had every appearance of being a happy woman; but she did not long survive Fabrice, whom she continued to adore to the last, and who spent only a single year at his Chartreuse.

The prisons of Parma were empty, the Count was immensely wealthy, and Ernesto V had the love and respect of his subjects, who compared his reign to that of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany.

TO THE HAPPY FEW.

THE END

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED

LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below, or on the date to which renewed.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

REC'D LD
OCT 29 1962

REC'D LD
OCT 29 1962

REC'D LD
OCT 29 1962

REC'D LD
FEB 2 '65-5 PM

16Feb'65JS

6MAR'63PY

REC'D LD
APR 12'65-3 PM

REC'D LD
FEB 27 1963

Purdue

19May'64C

REC'D LD
MAY 19 '64-7 PM

INTER-LIBRARY
LOAN
NOV 30 1970

24Nov'64LM

LD 21A-50m-3,'62
(C7097s10)476B

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

Digitized by Google

YB

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES

C008591681

569041

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google